
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2021

by R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/21/3279070

9 Codicote Road, Welwyn, AL6 9ND

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Stuart Carnegie against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2021/1134/HOUSE, dated 2 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 21 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is alterations to ground floor layout and proposed first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Reference is made to the Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016. However, since there is no certainty that the policies within this will be adopted in their current form, I can afford them limited weight.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property comprises a currently uninhabited, mid-20th century, detached dwelling, which is of no historic or architectural merit. The dwelling is in a poor state of repair and would benefit from modernisation or replacement. It is situated within a substantial plot of land, accessed from Codicote Road via a steep private driveway serving two other two-storey dwellings. There is a pedestrian access from the rear garden on to Roman Way, which also comprises a mixture of houses and bungalows. The site is bound by mature landscaping and despite its elevated position there are very limited long or short distance public views into or out of it. However, as the long term future of the trees, some of which are deciduous, cannot be guaranteed, their existing presence does not negate the need for good design that responds to its local context.
5. The proposal would substantially increase the height and scale of the existing dwelling, which is predominantly single storey. That alone is not grounds to refuse planning permission. An increase in scale and height, subject to suitable

- design, could potentially be achieved without causing any harm. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the scale of the dwelling could be substantially increased under permitted development rights (PD) and that two-storey properties are not uncommon in the immediate surrounding area.
6. It is also proposed to change the external materials throughout from brick, to a smooth off white render, with grey composite cladding, an artificial black slate tiled roof and grey aluminium windows. Render and cladding are quite common in this area, particularly along Codicote Road and also on Carleton Rise, which like the appeal site is located above the tree lined embankment running adjacent to Codicote Road. The proposed materials, despite not attempting to match those of the existing dwelling, would be used throughout the whole of the building, giving it a single matching finish and would not therefore result in any harm to its appearance.
 7. However, the overall design of the proposal is somewhat confusing, due to the mixture of styles and features that do not particularly complement each other. No design statement has been submitted with the proposal to explain or justify how it relates to the site or its immediate setting. It is unclear why a feature generally associated with grand historic houses or public buildings of importance would be added to the modernisation of a mid-20th century dwelling, surrounded by properties of a similar architectural style and era.
 8. Whilst I acknowledge the mixture of properties in the immediate area, these comprise older more traditional properties along Codicote Road and mid-20th century dwellings on nearby Roman Way and Carleton Rise. The architecture is relatively modest and simple. I therefore agree with the council that the revised roof form and design features such as the proposed white painted timber columns supporting a two storey high canopy, above solid oak double doors would detract from the character and appearance of the area. I did not observe any similar features in the area during my visit and certainly not on any modern buildings.
 9. The appellant's statement suggests that the scheme should be treated as a replacement dwelling, that the front canopy and pillars could be omitted from the scheme by condition and that alternative materials could be conditioned to be agreed by the council prior to commencement of the development. However, I am required to consider the plans before me on the basis that they have been submitted, in order to avoid prejudicing any other party. The appellant's statement also advises that existing boundary landscaping is to be retained with further planting introduced although no details of any tree protection measures or new planting schemes have been provided.
 10. Planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A drawing, which the appellant submitted to the council under a prior approval application, was appended to the appeal documentation. It has been brought to my attention by a neighbour representation that the council concluded that scheme was not PD. Prior to this appeal being issued, the appellant submitted confirmation that a revised PD scheme has now been accepted by the council. However, I have not been provided with any drawings of that revised scheme. Consequently, I am unable to assess whether or not the appeal scheme would be better or worse than the accepted fallback position and this reduces the weight I can give it.

11. Although I have found that a two-storey dwelling finished in render could be acceptable in principle, the amended roof form and detailed design of the proposal before me would be contrary to policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which collectively seek to ensure that new development is of high quality design that relates well to the character and context of its surroundings. The proposal would also conflict with the council's Supplementary Design Guide, however as this is guidance rather than policy, which pre-dates the introduction of increased permitted development rights for householders, I have only given this limited weight in reaching my decision.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

Rachael Bartlett

INSPECTOR