

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 November 2021

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 November 2021

Appeal Ref. APP/J1915/D/21/3281053

17 Grange Road, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5NG

- 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 Mrs Daisy Roth-Burgess against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application ref. 3/21/1474/HH, dated 24 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as *First floor extension*.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for *First floor extension* at 17 Grange Road, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5NG in accordance with the terms of the application ref. 3/21/1474/HH, dated 24 May 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans numbered GR:01, UK028-S.1 and UK028-S.2.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be as specified on the approved plan numbered GR:01.

Main issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposed first floor extension upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area (BSCA) and upon the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers at 17a Grange Road with regard to the potential for any overbearing impact and loss of outlook.

Reasons

3. The BSCA, within which the appeal site is located, encompasses a sizeable section of the central area of Bishop's Stortford which is characterized by a diverse and high quality built environment. The surroundings of the appeal site are residential in character. On the same side of Grange Road as the appeal site and within the BSCA, there are various houses dating mainly from the mid
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to late 19th century. No. 17 is one such property. It forms a linked or semi-detached pair with no. 17a. It would appear that the original building here was subdivided a long time ago to create the 2 separate dwellings at nos 17 and 17a. No. 17 was provided with the original long 2-storey rear-projecting wing which has been previously extended to the rear and the side.

4. Many of the dwellings along Grange Road are identified in the Council's BSCA Appraisal and Management Plan as non-listed yet worthy buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution to the character and appearance of the BSCA. I have noted that this document does not grant nos 15, 17 and 17a with such an accolade. Nonetheless, this does alter the statutory duty for special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
5. Whenever the previous 2-storey and single-storey rear extensions might have been built, neither of them is particularly sizeable. It is proposed to add a first floor rear extension over the existing, ground floor lean-to extension which is predominantly clad in timber boards. This would provide an additional (fourth) bedroom. Given the degree to which the proposed extension would be set back well away from the front wall of the house, it would have no material impact upon the street scene.
6. In private vantage points from the rear, it would be evident that there would be no increase in the dwelling's footprint. Whilst the scheme would further elongate the building at first floor level, this would not be out of kilter with the dwelling's deep plan form which is already a strong physical characteristic and attribute of the property. Given its limited overall size, scale and depth and the design of its hip-ended roof set below the main roof ridge, I consider that the additional bulk and mass of the extension would be well within tolerable limits. The extension would generally appear as a subservient addition to the dwelling.
7. The extension would not result in the dwelling being out of proportion with the very deep rear garden or reaching too far back in relation to nearby dwellings. In fact, it would roughly align with the 2-storey rear-projecting wing of no. 13.
8. Noting the appropriate use of render, including as a replacement for the existing timber cladding, and the welcome introduction of a traditional sliding sash window in the rear elevation, instead of the 2 existing narrow windows at rear first floor level which are wholly out of keeping, I consider that the proposed extension would represent a visually attractive solution, exhibit a high standard of design and be sufficiently complementary and sympathetic to the parent building and the surrounding residential area within the BSCA, the character and appearance of which would be preserved.
9. I find on the **first main issue** that the proposed first floor extension would be an example of high-quality design which would preserve the character and appearance of the dwelling and the BSCA. As such, there would be no conflict with the aims of Policies HOU11, DES4 and HA4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 (EHDP), Policy HDP2 of Bishop's Stortford Town Council Neighbourhood Plan for All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley 2016-2032 or the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) insofar as it relates to achieving well-designed places and the historic environment.

10. The experience of no. 17a as being set within a long back garden facing north would endure. The appeal dwelling already projects rearwards along the shared boundary with no. 17a for a considerable distance. The 2 main rear-facing windows, serving a bedroom and a kitchen, at no. 17a are positioned immediately alongside the opposing side wall of no. 17. Given this layout and the separation distance and acute viewing angle between those windows and the proposed extension, the occupiers of those 2 rooms would have little awareness of the extension. There would be no unduly significant overbearing impact on the outlook from those rooms. Given the existing extent of the building on the boundary and the screening effect of an attractive and mature ornamental tree in the rear garden of no. 17a next to the proposed extension, the enjoyment of that neighbouring garden would not be seriously compromised for any reason.
11. I note that the only concern lodged by the occupiers of no. 17a related to the tree. In order to accommodate the extension, the tree may need to be slightly pruned but certainly not uprooted.
12. I find on the **second main issue** that the proposed first floor extension would avoid any significant detrimental impacts on the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring property at no. 17a taking into account the potential for an overbearing effect and a loss of outlook. As such, there would be no conflict with the aims of EHDP Policy DES4. Similarly, there would also be compliance with the Framework which seeks to ensure developments create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers.
13. The scheme will enhance the quality of life for the occupiers of no. 17 by providing additional accommodation. This is a further factor that weighs in favour of granting planning permission. I realise that 2 previous planning applications for similar proposals were refused about a decade ago before the adoption of the EHDP. No appeals were lodged against those decisions and in any event, I have assessed this current proposal entirely on its own merits. The Council found that the scheme would not significantly detract from the amenities of the neighbouring property at 15 Grange Road for any reason and I could see no basis to disagree with that stance.
14. In addition to a condition setting a time limit for the commencement of development, a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant approved drawings is necessary as this provides certainty. I have also imposed a condition requiring the use of the materials shown on one of the approved plans to ensure that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the dwelling and the BSCA.
15. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the absence of objections from Bishop's Stortford Town Council and the grant of planning permission (ref. 3/19/0505/HH) for a single-storey rear extension at 17a Grange Road, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR