



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 November 2021

by Robert Fallon B.Sc. (Hons) PGDipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K1935/D/20/3265621

55A Whitney Drive, Stevenage, SG1 4BH

- 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 Matthew Squires against the decision of Stevenage Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00198/FPH dated 11 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 5 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "single storey front garage".
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey front garage at 55A Whitney Drive, Stevenage, SG1 4BH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/00198/FPH dated 11 April 2020, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Procedural matters

2. Since the appeal was submitted, a revised version of the Framework¹ has been published. Both main parties have been given the opportunity to comment on this, but no responses were received.
3. The Council has confirmed that its decision was based on amended plans, which show a reduction in size of the proposed garage. For the avoidance of doubt and in view of the fact that there does not appear to be any dispute between the Council and appellant on this matter, I have proceeded to assess the scheme on the basis that the plan under consideration is Drawing No DP1051/01 (Rev F) dated 02/2020.

Main issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area;
 - living conditions, with specific regard to whether the garage would result in an adverse loss of outlook from the neighbouring property at No 53A Whitney Drive.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, July 2021.

Reasons

Appeal site context

5. The appeal site consists of a bungalow on a small plot that fronts onto Whitney Drive. It forms part of a low density post-WWII (circa 1960s/1970s) development containing detached houses and bungalows with tapered and curved building lines, mature trees and well-planted open plan front gardens.
6. A further defining characteristic of housing on the road is the strong sense of architectural cohesion generated by the consistent use of wide-fronted dwellings, asymmetrical front elevations with differing forms of single storey, 2-storey and first-floor front projections, low-pitch gable roofs, large window openings and tile hanging & timber cladding at first floor level. Overall, I found Whitney Drive to be an attractive and well-designed post-war estate with a distinct sense of spaciousness set around mature front gardens and trees.

Character and appearance

7. The proposed scheme would be similar in form to the existing front projection at the neighbouring property to the east (No 53A) and also partly replicate the garage projection to the side elevation of the neighbouring property to the west (No 57). As a consequence, the proposed front garage projection would reinforce the building line rhythm of this part of the street and not look out of place. Furthermore, the scheme would provide a new focal point-front entrance and additional visual articulation to the host property's nondescript front elevation, in a way that complements the design of other properties on the road which also have front projections and main entrance doors facing the road.
8. In view of the above, I conclude that the proposal would accord with Policy GD1 of the Local Plan² which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to its location and surrounds.
9. I also find that the scheme accords with Section 6.2 of the Council's Design Guide³ and Paragraph 130 Framework, which collectively seek, amongst other things: (a) that the shape and projection of a front extension should not be over-dominant in views along the street or destroy the harmony or balance between existing houses; (b) development that is visually attractive and sympathetic to local character; and (c) schemes that maintain a strong sense of place.

Living conditions

10. In view of the single storey height of the extension, its modest depth and it being stepped inside the property boundary, I am satisfied that it would not have any harmful impact on the outlook from the front elevation kitchen and dining room windows at No 53A. I am also satisfied that there is sufficient intervening distance between the development and the existing front projection at No 53A to avoid the creation of a 'tunnel effect'.
11. In view of the above, I conclude that the proposal would accord with Policy GD1 of the Local Plan which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that new

² Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031, Adopted 22 May 2019, Stevenage Borough Council.

³ Stevenage Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document, Adopted 21st October 2009, Stevenage Borough Council.

development does not lead to an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses or the surrounding area.

12. I also find that the development accords with Paragraph 130 of the Framework, which states that planning decisions should create places with a high standard of amenity for existing users.

Other matters

13. The occupier of No 53A has raised concerns that the proposal would result in a loss of light to their kitchen and dining room. However, in view of this dwelling's location to the west of the extension and the daily path of the sun⁴, I am satisfied that the development would not result in any significant loss of direct sunlight or overshadowing. I do however recognise that there would be a loss of diffuse daylight to the front elevation windows of No 53A, but given the single storey height of the extension and it being stepped away from the dividing boundary line, am of the view that this would be limited and not sufficiently harmful to warrant dismissal of the appeal.
14. The occupier of No 53A has also raised concerns that the extension would block their view to the east and make them feel less secure. However, whilst this view may be valued by the occupier, I do not consider it in the public interest to protect the private views of individual properties. I am also satisfied that this property will remain sufficiently visible from the public realm to maintain an adequate degree of security.
15. The issue of impact on property value has also been raised by the occupier of No 53A. However, it is a well-founded principle that the planning system does not exist to protect private interests such as value of land or property.

Conditions

16. A condition has been imposed to ensure the scheme is carried out in accordance with the amended plan. I have also attached a condition regarding the materials to be used to ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory.

Conclusion

17. In view of the above, having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Robert Fallon

INSPECTOR

Schedule of conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.

⁴ In the northern hemisphere the sun rises in the east and then takes an arc across the southern sky before setting in the west.

- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and details:- Drawing no. DP1051/01 (Rev F).
- 3) No development shall commence until details / samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details / samples.

End of Schedule