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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2022

**by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/21/3282852**

**22 Rooks Hill, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6ET**

- 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 and Mrs Meer against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 6/2021/1527/HOUSE, dated 11 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 2 September 2021.
  - The proposed development is for erection of part two storey extension to rear with a garage conversion.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of part two storey extension to rear with a garage conversion erection of single storey dwelling subject to the conditions set out in the schedule below.

### Main Issues

2. The main issues is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

### Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two storey semi detached bay fronted house within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area (WGCCA). Properties within this part of the WGCCA are generally characterised by simple orange/red brick walls, rosemary tiled roofs and through their symmetrical design, hipped roofs and generous landscape setting, which includes open plan front gardens and tree lined highway verges. They also contain attractive windows with horizontal, slender glazing bars that may reflect original 'Crittall' type window designs.
4. Several properties exhibit simple flat roof garages that are set some way back to the sides of the houses. The garages generally contain a single garage door and due to them being side by side with neighbouring garages create a type of ancillary linking structure between houses where plot dimensions allow. I have evidence before me that the garage to the appeal property is not original to the house itself.
5. The proposal seeks permission for the removal of the existing garage and a partial rebuilding with single crittall style window within its front elevation. In removing the garage the proposal would create a small gap between the

- houses where currently the garages appear nearly adjoined. The other part of the proposal seeks permission for a part two storey rear extension to the rear.
6. The appeal site is located within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area and as such, I am required by Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to give 'Special Attention' to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. This is reflected in The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework), which states that 'Great Weight' should be given to the assets' conservation and illustrates the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to the creation of sustainable and economically viable communities.
  7. Further to this Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield Local District Plan 2005 and Policies SP9 and SADM15 of the Welwyn Hatfield Draft Local Plan 2016 also seek to ensure proposals are of a high quality design and preserve or enhance the context to which development is being proposed and that they are complimentary to the historic environment.
  8. It appears common ground between the parties that the rear extensions would not cause harm to either the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or the living conditions of neighbours. I concur with this assessment and consider that the main issue is the demolition of the existing single storey garage and its rebuilding as habitable space, along with the impact that this would have upon the character of the Conservation Area and the streetscene.
  9. In assessing this appeal I consider that the special architectural and historic qualities of the WGCCA are largely concerned with the aesthetic and associative heritage values around the early Garden City Movement. Although I consider that the area of Rooks Hill is a later phase of the development it nevertheless exhibits several qualities that are consistent with the original vision and the earlier phases of the estate. The WGCCA Appraisal<sup>1</sup> suggests that these features consist of both the quality of landscaping both to the highway and to individual properties and the layout, design and materiality of individual houses.
  10. In this case, Rooks Hill itself contains several similar houses that are notable for their symmetry and quality of materials as I outlined above. I consider that the garages themselves are supplementary to this character but are not fundamental to it.
  11. Therefore, I consider that the contribution of the garage itself to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is more limited than the Council suggest. Although a small gap would be created through this proposal and the garage door would be removed, I consider that the important element of an ancillary type, flat roof structure being well set back within the building line would be maintained. Moreover the utilisation of a similar Crittal type window to the extension would relate well to those windows in the main property.
  12. Although there would be some modest change through this proposal through, what would be a very modest gap between structures and the loss of a non original garage and its associated door, I consider that this impact would not cause harm to the overall significance of the parent property or to the Conservation Area as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted in 2007.

13. In light of this I consider that the character and appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area would not be harmed through this proposal and that the proposal is of sufficiently appropriate and contextual design so to allow it to meet Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield Local District Plan 2005 and Policies SP9 and SADM15 of the Welwyn Hatfield Draft Local Plan 2016.

### **Conditions**

14. I have included the conditions suggested by the Council in their appeal statement that meet the requirements of the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance.

### **Conclusion**

15. For the reasons above, taking into account all other matters raised, I allow the appeal subject to the conditions outlined below.

*A Graham*

INSPECTOR

### **Schedule of Conditions**

1. The development hereby permitted must be begun before the expiry of three years from the date of this decision.
2. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans: FP 08.03.21, FP 07.03.21, FP 06.03.21, FP 05.03.21,

### **End of Schedule**