



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 February 2022

by Rebecca Thomas MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/21/3283921

4 Vicarage Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 9BE

- 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 Alexandra Kanold against the decision of East Herts Council.
 - The application Ref 3/21/1312/HH, dated 12 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is first floor front extensions and front porch canopy.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling located in a cul-de-sac, in a residential area. The property is built of pale brick with a tile roof. There is an existing flat roofed element sits forward of the main elevation, with the garage also having a flat roof, set behind this element. The first floor adjoining the neighbour is recessed, and this element would be extended as part of the development.
4. The area is characterised by semi-detached dwellings which are constructed in similar materials, featuring timber cladding and similar recessed elevations and flat roofed elements. I was able to see on my site visit that many properties have been extended by providing 'infill' extensions to the first floor above the garage elements. I was also able to see some other variations on alterations, including gable features and pitched roofs, although these were far fewer in number. The area is characterised by its relatively uniform appearance and any additions, on the whole, respect the flat roofed elements and do not appear to significantly extend beyond the original footprints or elevations, nor deviate from the main characteristics of the original dwellings.
5. The infill of the first floor above the garage would not extend beyond the main front elevation of the dwelling. Whilst I was able to see that the neighbour has not been extended, given the extensions in the street and local area of similar appearance I do not consider that this would result in significant harm to the

overall character and appearance to the dwelling or local area. Nonetheless, the proposal to extend the first floor to include a gable feature with the gabled porch below is not a feature which is common throughout the street and the local area. Whilst I accept that there are nearby properties with gabled porch extensions or other, these are the exception and do not contribute to the overall character and appearance, rather are noticeable in their differences, and appear as a stark alteration in the area which is primarily uniform and regular in appearance.

6. Although the council does not raise specific concerns with regard to the porch extension, I consider that the development should be assessed as a whole and find that the proposal to provide a gable porch feature, combined with a first floor gabled feature to the front elevation represents a stark contrast to the extensions and alterations that I was able to see in the local area. The height and the prominence of the proposed development is at odds with the character of the original dwelling, its immediate adjoining neighbour and the local area. Despite the use of matching materials, and the set-down of the proposed development from the main ridge of the existing dwelling, the bulk of the proposal would be dominant and prominent as seen from the street and would unacceptably diminish the character, appearance and integrity of the host building, resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
7. The appeal proposals would therefore conflict with the objectives of the District Plan¹ Policies DES4 and HOU11, which set out criteria for assessing extensions to dwellings, including consideration of size, scale, mass, form, siting, design and materials of construction which should be appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area. In particular, the proposal would fail to be of high standard of design and layout to reflect and promote local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

8. I have had regard to the appellant's ground of appeal and to the presence of other properties within the vicinity, some of which appear to have been extended, however I am not aware of the particular circumstances in these cases and in any event, I must consider the appeal scheme on its own merits. The existence of other extensions in the locality does not justify the harm I have identified nor does the lack of objections from neighbours or the Town Council, or the benefits of providing additional living space.
9. Whilst the principle of development has not been disputed by either party, and the National Planning Policy Framework advocates innovation through design, this must not be at the expense of the local character and surrounding built environment.
10. Whilst I have given the appellant's personal circumstances consideration, I am mindful of the advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance² that in general planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. It is also probable that the proposed development would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be relevant.

¹ East Herts District Plan (2018)

² Paragraph 008 Reference ID: 21b-008-20140306 – What is a material planning consideration?

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out above, I find that the proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the appeal should be dismissed.

Rebecca Thomas

INSPECTOR