The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2022

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/22/3302131
12 Elmoor Avenue, Welwyn AL6 9PA

- 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 Danielle Griffin against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
- The application Ref 6/2022/0491/HOUSE, dated 1 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 12 May 2022.
- The development proposed is an external material change, entire property to be rendered; part retrospective for a single storey rear extension following refusal 6/2021/1994/HOUSE.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The appellant has described the proposal as in the above heading. However, the plans show that the walls of the appeal property would be rendered save for the northeast elevation, which is to remain as brick. I have assessed the proposal on that basis.

3. The proposed rear extension has been constructed. It appears to be broadly in accordance with the plans.

Main issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a detached 2-storey dwelling with red brick walls and a tiled roof. It is located at the end of a short cul-de-sac within a predominantly residential area, wherein dwellings vary in age, type, style, and general appearance. For the most part, existing buildings are of brick construction with limited and restrained use of render. The overall character of the local area is harmonious variety, with brick as a dominant and unifying material.

6. The appeal dwelling occupies an elevated position relative to Ellesfield, which is a road further to the northeast of the site, due to the notable difference in ground levels. From several vantage points along Ellesfield, No 12 is a conspicuous feature within the street scene. It stands tall on higher ground

behind and above the low-profile bungalows that front this highway. Unlike No 12, these Ellesfield properties fall within a Conservation Area (CA).

7. The walls on three sides of the appeal dwelling are proposed to be rendered with an off-white finish. The fourth side, which is the northeast elevation of the dwelling facing Ellesfield, would remain as red brick.

8. In my experience, dwellings that differ in appearance due to the materials used can positively contribute to the diversity of an area and add visual interest to the street scene to which they belong. However, in this case, the extensive use of render, as proposed, would draw the eye as a discordant and uncharacteristic feature within an area of predominantly brick buildings.

9. This impression would be most pronounced from the section of Ellesfield just to the north of the site. From this part of the highway, a considerable expanse of render on the northwest elevation of the completed dwelling would be visible. It would markedly differ in colour and texture to the largely unified character of the local area and the CA, with its broadly consistent pitched roofs and red brick elevations. That the northeast elevation of the finished building would remain as brick would only serve to visually accentuate this jarring contrast because it would be viewed from some vantage points together with the rendered northwest elevation.

10. Reference is made to other properties within Welwyn and on Elmoor Avenue that include render, with photographs provided. None of the examples cited include 2-storey dwellings with the entire building rendered apart from a single wall nor do they occupy a prominent position in relation to Ellesfield and the CA. Given the notable differences between these cases and the proposal, I am unable to attach more than limited weight to them in support of the appeal.

11. That some of the existing brickwork of No 12 has been damaged by the removal of ivy and that material used for the rear extension do not match the host building was evident from my observations at the site visit. However, there is nothing before me to indicate that these issues could only be resolved by extensively altering the dwelling, as proposed.

12. The Council raises no objection to the proposed rear extension. From the submitted plans, I, too, find this element of the appeal scheme acceptable. However, from my inspection of the plans it is not clearly severable to the proposed rendering, which is objectionable. Therefore, I am unable to issue a split decision that grants planning permission solely for it.

13. On the main issue, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character or appearance of the local area. Accordingly, it is contrary to Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance. These policies and guidance require that new development achieves a high standard of design and respects the character and context of the area. It is also at odds with the National Planning Policy Framework, which states that development should be sympathetic to local character and add to the overall quality of the area.

14. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR