

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 September 2022

by P Eggleton BSc(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/22/3303699

12 St Andrews Place, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9UA

- 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 M Malone against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01493/FPH, dated 30 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 19 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is a loft extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The proposal would result in a large dormer to the rear of this property and a smaller dormer to the front. The same front dormer was accepted as part of a previous planning approval. That consent also included a large rear dormer. The currently proposed rear dormer would be wider than the approved and would have a pitched roof rather than the flat roof previously accepted.
 4. The proposed rear dormer would dominate the roof slope, extending across much of the width of the property. The pitched roof would include eaves and gutters which would increase its perceived width further, especially as these would be viewed alongside the eaves of the adjoining property. The scale of the addition would be at odds with the design of the dwellings generally and the pitch of the roof proposed would conflict with the design and details of the existing dormers and gables. The gabled fascia would increase the prominence of the structure and contrast with that of the rear elevation of the adjoining property, number 13. The structure would appear cramped within this roof slope; it would be extremely dominant within the roofscape; and it would not represent good quality design within this context.
 5. The roof of this property is not prominent in the wider area. It can be glimpsed from Storehouse Lane to the rear, which forms the boundary to the conservation area beyond, but it is largely screened by vegetation, although it
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will be more evident in winter. These views are from a low level, from within the narrow roadway, with intervening trees. As these large buildings are set back, the prominence of this high-level structure, despite its uncharacteristic form, would not be highly noticeable, given the limited views available. The dormer would be more visible from some of the properties to the rear which lie within the conservation area. Longer views may be available, but these would be from a long distance and viewed against the backdrop of these modern properties. Although the new structure would have a limited wider impact, its contribution would not be positive. I am not satisfied that it would be sufficiently prominent to result in harm to the setting of the adjacent conservation area, but it would detract from the character and appearance of this building and the immediate area. In any event, lack of prominence is not a good reason for accepting poor design.

6. The extant permission is a material consideration. It is likely that if this appeal fails, that permission would be implemented. The approved dormer would also be at odds with the design details of these houses and would also be a dominant feature within this roof slope. Given that the views that are available are from significantly below, the horizontal roofline would follow that of the eaves and ridge and would be less evident compared to the wider and higher, low-pitched gable and fascia. The approved structure would also represent a less cramped arrangement given the space retained to each side, particularly with regard to its proximity to the gable and eaves of number 13. Overall, the currently proposed details would be more harmful than those previously accepted by the council. The extant permission does not therefore represent a good reason for accepting this proposal and indicates that a less harmful development, that would achieve similar objectives, could be achieved.
7. The proposal would represent poor design that would detract from the character and appearance of this area. It would conflict with Policy 28 and Policy 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 1996 as it would not be sympathetic to the existing house in form or proportions; and would not enhance the site or its surroundings. As these policies remain consistent with the design objectives of the *National Planning Policy Framework*, they can be afforded full weight. The proposal would be at odds with Policy D2 of the emerging local plan. The inspector has reported on this plan but it has not, as yet, been adopted. The changes recommended to Policy D2 would not alter the current development plan design objectives.
8. I have had regard to the comments of neighbours including those that have offered support. The matters in support do not indicate that a different conclusion should be reached. As many of the benefits of this proposal could be achieved by the existing permission, which would be less harmful, I dismiss the appeal.

Peter Eggleton

INSPECTOR