



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 December 2022

By A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/22/3306336

11 Aldock, Welwyn Garden City AL7 4QF

- 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 P Martin against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Council.
 - The application Ref: 6/2022/1476/HOUSE dated 24 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is replacement of existing garage and changes to boundary treatment.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for replacement of existing garage and changes to boundary treatment subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 5415/-PO1, TPP/11AWGCH/010/A
 - 3) The construction materials including the colour, texture and jointing thereof to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted and in remediation of walls affected by the removal of the existing garage shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 4) Notwithstanding what appears on the approved drawings, prior to commencement of the development hereby permitted large scale details of the perimeter walls showing the manner of construction of the junction with the roofing finishes shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The overall height shall not increase from what appears on drawing 5415/P01.

Main Issue:

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon character and appearance of the host dwelling and its setting within the CA.

Reasons:

3. No.11 Aldock (No.11) lies within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area (CA) and is a modestly-sized detached dwelling within a small group of 11 mostly detached two-storey houses of individual design. The character of this part of the CA provides a tranquil verdant setting for residential use with

gardens of good size and mature planting including a large 'capital' tree in the shared access area.

4. The proposal involves the removal of an existing flat-roofed garage at the front of the property and its replacement on the side garden with access across the existing forecourt and garage footprint. The alteration would result in a more open frontage to the house although, from my observations, it may be that the existing garage did not form part of the house as originally constructed.
5. The appellant has pointed to the garage being of inadequate size for larger modern vehicles by way of justification. The design and layout of the garage, apparently dating from the middle decades of the twentieth-century does tend to support this justification to which I attach significant weight on the basis that this would result in less cars visible in the tranquil surroundings of the appeal site and is of practical benefit to the occupation of the dwelling.
6. The Council express concerns as to the prominence of the proposed building by reference to a lack of subservience and to its height, repeating their refusal of a previous scheme where the garage was less inset into the garden. I note the Council's reference to subservience but the proposal is for a separate ancillary single storey building and not for an extension so, having regard to the location of No.11 within the CA, the consideration to be addressed would give emphasis to the impact of what is proposed on the wider setting rather than the host building alone.
7. Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 (WHDP) require development to pursue the objective of high quality design, respecting existing character and where possible to enhance that character. These objectives are sustained in Policy SP9 (place making and high quality design) of the emerging Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council – Draft Local Plan Submission version 2016 (WHDLP) of relating well to surroundings and enhancing a sense of place.
8. In this instance the proposed garage would change the appearance of No.11 in the street by adding apparent width to the built form whilst removing more prominently placed built form to the front of the dwelling. But change is not to be assumed as harmful. As the building would be inset into the garden and behind a fence at the boundary this increased built form would only be apparent in partly obscured frontal and oblique views from the public realm and, being flat-roofed, would not unduly harm the sense of openness currently found.
9. Whilst the height of the proposed building would be greater than that of the proposed hedge replacement fence which seeks to screen the building from the public realm, construction detailing plays an important part in the character and appearance of a building and, in this case would be material to the impact of the proposal on the Conservation Area.
10. Drawing 5415/P01 shows a perimeter fascia board at the roof edges to receive the felt flat roof covering. Whilst this detail is apparent in the existing garage, this detail is to my mind, undesirable and largely uncharacteristic of the original host dwelling. Screen walls related to domestic buildings (and some single storey flat-roofed annexes) of the mid-twentieth century are typically finished with a masonry coping and not with the flat roof finish wrapped onto a timber fascia as proposed. In any event the effect of this latter detail would be to draw

attention to the presence of an expanse of flat-roofed construction whereas a brick parapet or slab-coped wall would create, in views from the public realm, a desirable ambiguity as to what lies behind and be more typical of mid-twentieth-century housing.

11. Notwithstanding that the proposed building would include a garage door, the application of an appropriate detail to the cap of the prominent perimeter walls of the proposal, together with the careful use of appropriate materials (whilst remaining within the overall height shown) would mitigate any residual visual harm arising from the proposal in terms of character and appearance. A further point in this regard is that remediation of walls affected by the removal of the garage could be detrimental but both of these matters could be addressed by suitably worded conditions to make the development acceptable in planning terms.
12. Overall I consider that the proposal would neither be unduly prominent nor, on the basis I have reasoned, uncharacteristic and detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. I find that the proposed development, if served by the measures identified, would accord with Policies D1 and D2 of the WHDP and not conflict with policies SP9 and SADM15 of the emerging WHDLP, supporting the objectives as to design quality such that there would, in consequence, be no conflict with the development plan taken as a whole.
13. In reaching this decision I have had full regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the CA in accordance with the duty set out in section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Therefore and subject to the usual plans and timing conditions, together with conditions as to detailing and materials, the appeal succeeds.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR