



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 January 2023

by Mrs Chris Pipe BA(Hons), DipTP, MTP, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 February 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/22/3312439

23 Gresley Close, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 7QA

- 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 Graham Swanson against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2022/1566/HOUSE dated 1 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 22 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as single storey rear extension, first floor front extension & loft conversion including raising existing roof height, addition of dormer to rear & rooflights to front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for single storey rear extension, first floor front extension & loft conversion including raising existing roof height, addition of dormer to rear & rooflights to front at 23 Gresley Close, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 7QA in accordance with the terms of the application, 6/2022/1566/HOUSE dated 1 July 2022, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans P01 Revision D Proposed Plans & Elevations.
 - 3) 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.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and the appeal property itself.

Reasons

3. The site is within a predominantly residential area, in general properties comprise two storey detached properties. The appeal site is tucked into a corner of a cul-de-sac within the residential estate. Some properties in the area have been extended or altered and designs of properties vary, notwithstanding

this there is a harmony to design and materials used in the properties within the immediate area.

4. The Council has drawn my attention to 15 Gresley Close which is visually symmetrical to the appeal site, situated in a corner with linked garage attached to the front of the property at the end of a private drive. I observed during my site visit that due to the locations of No. 15 and the appeal site the symmetry is not obvious in the streetscene, and therefore this symmetry does not add to the character and appearance of the area.
5. The proposed first floor front extension would reduce the visual gap above the attached room linking the garage to the main two storey form of the house. The first floor front extension would be modest in scale and would alter the design of the property, nonetheless the existing dwelling is a modern detached property which has no architectural merit. The proposed first floor extension would not be incongruous nor dominate the property or the streetscene.
6. The increase in roof height is modest and would not be obvious in the streetscene given the location in the corner of a cul-de-sac and in an area where design and height of properties vary. The addition of rooflights to the front of the property would be relatively unobtrusive.
7. The Council's Supplementary Design Guidance (the SDG) states that dormer windows should be contained in the roof slope, be set in at least 1metre from the flank wall, and not extend beyond the ridge of the existing dwelling. The proposed large rear dormer would not comply with the SDG.
8. Notwithstanding this, it is important to recognise that such guidance does not constitute a 'black and white' set of rules to be applied rigidly or exclusively when other material considerations indicate that an exception may be appropriate.
9. The proposed rear dormer would be large covering the majority of the rear roof slope. The proposal would add bulk to the existing property. Nonetheless due to the neighbouring property set back into the rear garden which screens the rear of the appeal property to a degree, the dormer would not be obvious to the surrounding properties. The appeal site backs onto the trainline with commercial units a significant distance beyond. Views from surrounding properties towards the proposed dormer would be limited.
10. I observed during my site visit within the rear garden of the appeal site that a neighbouring property has a large rear dormer extension which can be viewed by neighbouring properties. Whilst rear dormers are not a common feature they are not alien to the area.
11. Both parties have drawn my attention to an allowed appeal at 20 Gresley Close¹ which included an increase in roof height and a rear dormer. No substantive evidence has been provided to demonstrate the similarities/differences between that proposal and the one before me, nonetheless each development must be considered on its individual merits, and I have reached my conclusion based on the individual merit of the appeal proposal.

¹ APP/C1950/W/20/3253628

12. I find that the proposed development would not harm the character and appearance of the area nor the appeal property itself.
13. There is no conflict with Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) and Policy SP9 of the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council - Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016 which seek amongst other things to ensure development is of high standard of design responding positively to the character and context of an area.
14. There is no conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) which seeks amongst other things to ensure developments are of good design appropriate and sympathetic to their surroundings.

Conclusion and Conditions

15. For the above reasons I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.
16. I have attached the standard time limit condition and a plans condition as this provides certainty. I have also added a condition concerning materials to ensure a satisfactory appearance.

C Pipe

INSPECTOR