



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 January 2023

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

Decision date: 2nd March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/D/22/3310298

35 Woodlands Close Golders Green London NW11 9QR

- 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 N Wechsler against the decision of The London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref: 22/3762/HSE dated 22 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 30 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is conversion of garage and porch extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of garage and porch extension at 35 Woodlands Close Golders Green London NW11 9QR in accordance with the terms of the application Ref: 22/3762/HSE dated 22 July 2022 and the plans submitted with it, 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: 2223-NMA-XX-00-DR-A-00100 (ground floor plan) ; 2223-NMA-XX-00-DR-A-00100 (roof plan; 2223-NMA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-00201 (proposed front elevation); 2223-NMA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-00202 (proposed side elevation).

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of 35 Woodlands Close (No.35) and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a wide-fronted semi-detached house located within Woodlands Close, a secluded residential area where houses are provided with relatively spacious frontages, a variety of landscape and boundary treatments and an absence of restrictions to on-road parking. No.35 faces a triangle of green space enclosed by the residential road. Unlike a large proportion of other houses in Woodlands Close which display prominent roof extensions and other alterations that significantly increase the accommodation, No.35 appears, in its frontal view, to be in a largely original form which includes a side garage which is partly integrated into the two-storey built form of the house. It is this part of No.35 which the appellant wishes to incorporate as habitable accommodation

together with a single-storey flat-roofed front extension which would align with the neighbouring property, No.36 Woodlands Close, a house which has also been extended to its side. Whilst that alignment derives from a combination of a slight step in the dwelling frontages and the addition of a smaller porch to No.36 such that the projection from the front elevation would be greater than its neighbour, that would, nevertheless, be the result of the proposal.

4. Policy DM01 of the Barnet Development Management Policies DPD 2012 (DMDPD) seeks to protect Barnet's character and appearance, requiring proposals preserve or enhance local character. The Council's Residential Design Guidance SPD (2016) indicates how such changes should be approached in order to comply with that objective. However, there are a number of dwellings of similar design to No.35 in the immediate area of the site and these display a variety of frontal changes including porches and garage conversions and side extensions; it is within this context of accrued change to appearance that the effect upon character and appearance should be considered.
5. The Council comment that the proposed front extension would be 'excessive and incongruous when viewed in the context of surrounding character' going on to refer to a disproportionate relationship between the host dwelling and the front porch compared to No.36, the adjacent (non-paired) dwelling concluding that 'In terms of the front porch part of the proposal, the extension of 1.58m beyond the existing front building line is considered to be excessive and incongruous when viewed in the context of the surrounding character.'
6. Significantly the officer report also addresses a permission granted to No.39 Woodlands Close¹ for a similar-sized 1.5m-deep front extension. The Council suggest this cannot be a precedent example due to the basis of permission arising from '*exceptional site circumstances*' (suggested as being due to the location of No.39 at the end of the street and tree screening) going on to state that (no.39) '*by no means serves as a precedent for a similarly deep front porch at the application site which presents a different set of circumstances*'.
7. However, although these dwellings are in different parts of the same street they are in similar settings and, moreover, I found no such justification in the report for that permission² which, to the contrary, states: '*Regarding the front porch, the row of semi-detached properties on Woodlands Close are eclectic in design and style. Other examples of front extensions/ porches with a variety of designs include 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 21, 26, 32 Woodlands Close. In line with the Barnet RDG 2016, the front porch would not prejudice the style, design and proportions of the host property, through an acceptable finished height, depth and subordinate roof form. The proposed front porch would result in a visually sympathetic form of development in light of its surroundings and other nearby front porches.*'
8. Whilst it is expected that professional judgement will lead to different conclusions in different circumstances in this case it appears that the Council have in part sought to justify its position on a factually incorrect basis. The assessment of impact upon character and appearance of the area made by the Council in the matter of 39 Woodlands Close aligns with my own in this matter, which is that the effect of such changes in the context of a street scene which has evolved with a variety of minor additions and alterations over time would

¹ 21/1386/HSE

² For No.39 as identified in footnote above

neither be obtrusive nor significantly detract from the character and appearance of the host dwelling or its setting.

9. I also note that the proposal would replace the obtrusive partial stone cladding of the front elevation and replace it with render which would be a benefit of the scheme in terms of appearance of the area. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not conflict with Policy DM01 of the DMDPD or with the Council's Design Guidance SPD. Although such guidance is important for the proper management of development, it is to be applied with regard to specific circumstances consequently, for the reasons given and taking all matters raised into account, my reasoning directs that the appeal should succeed subject to the usual conditions for timing and plans.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR