

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 November 2022

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/22/3307838

High Trees, Great Hornead, Hertfordshire, SG9 0NR

- 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 Kathryn Stacey against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/22/0389/HH, dated 22 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is erection of a single storey side extension with balcony above, single storey front extension and two storey side/rear/front extension incorporating front Juliet balcony. Enlargement of front and side windows.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed extensions on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the street scene and the surrounding area, including the Great Hornead Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal dwelling comprises a large two storey 1970s house set on a substantial plot on the south side of the street within the rural settlement of Great Hornead which is a designated conservation area. Great weight attaches to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021, requires clear and convincing justification for any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset including from development within its setting.
 4. The area is characterised by trees and hedgerows, especially on the southern side of the street where a stream separates dwellings from the public highway. This vegetation screens and softens the built environment which is characterised in the vicinity of the appeal dwelling by dwellings in larger plots on the southern side of the street. The northern side is characterised by generally smaller dwellings, farm buildings and a village hall, with some buildings set closer to the highway and more prominent in the street scene.
-

5. There are a number of large trees in the front garden of the appeal dwelling. Nevertheless, the house is clearly visible from the highway although set back by some 48m. It is a wide building, sited centrally within the wide plot. It is of simple and discreet design and partly clad in dark timber which helps it to blend with its wooded surroundings. Although an anomaly in the street scene it is neutral in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
6. The proposed two storey side and rear extension would increase the width of the property by some 6.3m. In addition, the proposed single storey extension on the opposite end elevation would extend the full depth of the dwelling and add a further 3m to the width. The overall width of the building would thus increase from some 14m to some 23m. This would be a substantial increase of more than half the width of the existing building and would result in an already wide dwelling appearing disproportionately wide, notwithstanding that it would remain well separated from the side boundaries of the plot.
7. The proposed front gable, which would wrap around part of the existing front elevation and slope down to ground floor eaves level over a proposed porch, would provide some relief and not be out of place on a 1970s dwelling. However, the extended ridge would be visible behind it, increasing the length of the existing ridge across the full extent of the property. Moreover, the arrangement of fenestration in the front gable, especially at ground floor, would be poor with little attempt to relate openings to each other or to the gable feature. Overall, it would be a prominent feature on the front elevation and clearly visible from the street that would be detrimental to the appearance of the dwelling and street scene and detract from its current neutral effect on the CA.
8. The eastern elevation would have an asymmetric gable which would not be out of keeping with the dwelling. Nevertheless, the arrangement of fenestration at ground floor would give it a disjointed appearance. Although this would not be visible from the street or other public places it would further demonstrate the lack of good design. I accept that the existing east elevation is of little merit but good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and the NPPF expects new development to add to the overall quality of the area and be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and layout.
9. The side/rear extension would project behind the dwelling with a gable end. In itself it would echo the simple and discreet design of the existing dwelling. However, in combination with the existing house, it would lead to an excessively wide appearance, especially combined with the single storey addition on the opposite end elevation.
10. Overall, I find that the proposed extensions, taken together, would fail to achieve a high standard of design and would be excessively wide. In consequence they would be unsympathetic to and out of scale with the host dwelling and would fail to respond positively to the context of the site or local distinctiveness.
11. The appellants point out that the dwelling is set in the middle of a 40m wide plot and that the proposed extensions would not be disproportionate to the plot or impinge on neighbours. Whilst this is correct it does not alter or outweigh the

harmful effect of the extensions on the character or appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area resulting from their unsympathetic scale, proportions and design. The proposed extensions would not therefore enhance or respect the existing building and would result in less than substantial harm to the CA.

12. Although harm to the CA would be less than substantial the NPPF requires any harm to be balanced against the public benefits of the development. Since I have found that the extensions would not respect or enhance the host dwelling and there are no other public benefits identified, and applying great weight to the conservation of the CA, the proposed development would therefore be unacceptable.
13. It is concluded on the main issue that the proposed extensions would have a materially harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene. Moreover, they would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Great Hormead CA. In consequence, the proposed extensions would conflict with Policies HOU11, DES4 and HA4 of the East Herts District Plan, 2018, and the NPPF. Taken together and amongst other things these expect extensions to dwellings to exhibit a high standard of design and layout such that their size, scale, form, siting and design is appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the dwelling and surrounding area so that they promote local distinctiveness and preserve or enhance the special interest, character and appearance of conservation areas.
14. The appellant states that permission was previously granted for three dwellings on the appeal site. However, I have no evidence regarding this permission with respect to siting or design and I do not know whether it remains extant. It therefore carries little weight.
15. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the support from the Parish Council, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR