The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 March 2023

by G Dring BA (Hons) MA MRTPI MAUDE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K1935/W/22/3306078
48 Made Feld, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 1PQ

- 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 and Mrs Islam against the decision of Stevenage Borough Council.
- The application Ref 22/00471/FP, dated 19 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 4 July 2022.
- The development proposed is 2no. one bedroom flats, double storey rear extension, single storey front extension and loft extension.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council have confirmed that a previous planning permission under reference 19/00628/FP was granted for a similar scheme, excluding the front and rear dormer windows proposed under the appeal scheme. Works on the appeal site were at an advanced stage at the time of my site visit. This appeal relates to the whole proposal including front, side and rear extensions and alterations to enable the creation of two flats in addition to the existing dwelling, however the reasons for refusal given by the Council relate only to the proposed front and rear dormers.

3. The Council have provided the approved plans in relation to the previously approved scheme and it is clear that the differences in the schemes relate to the revised siting of the two front rooflights and the construction of two front dormer windows and the removal of three rooflights in the rear elevation and the construction of one rear dormer window. The proposed front and rear dormer windows were not present or under construction at the time of my site visit.

4. The Council have not objected to the two storey side extension, single storey front extension, part single storey, part two storey rear extension, 2 rooflights or the creation of the two flats. I have no evidence before me that would lead me to an alternative view on these elements of the scheme.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:

    - the character and appearance of the original dwelling and the surrounding area; and

- the living conditions of the occupiers of 46 Made Feld with regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal site consists of a detached two storey dwelling which has been recently altered and extended under a previous planning permission to provide two additional flats in addition to the existing dwelling. The appeal site is located on a prominent corner adjacent to the junction of Made Feld and Exchange Road. The majority of dwellings within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site are two storey dwellings that are terraced or semi-detached. The anomaly to this is the telephone exchange building directly to the rear of the appeal site which is significantly taller in scale.

7. The existing dwelling is different to others in the immediate vicinity, largely due to it being detached and of a different design. However, whilst there is some variation in the design, the existing dwelling along with dwellings in the surrounding area are characterised by a strong and generally consistent rhythm and appearance of two storey built form with simple roof designs. Dormer windows are not a prevailing feature along Made Feld or Exchange Road, in the area that the appeal site is viewed in context with.

8. The proposed rear dormer window, whilst it would be set within the roof and would not cover more than half of the roof, due to its design, size, position and massing, it would result in a bulky and prominent addition which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. It would be out of keeping with the prevailing character of the area and given the corner position, it would be highly visible and dominant from public vantage points along Exchange Road resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the area.

9. The two dormer windows proposed to the front elevation facing Made Feld would be limited in size and would be set in from the side of the roof, above the eaves and lower than the ridge line. Due to the size, design and positioning proposed they would not result in an addition that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. However, the proposed front dormers would still be at odds with the prevailing character of the roof forms of two storey dwellings in the locality and would therefore result in harm to the character and appearance of the area. The use of matching materials in the construction of the proposed dormer windows would not overcome this harm.

10. I therefore find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area. It therefore conflicts with policies GD1 and SP8 of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Adopted May 2019 (LP) which seeks, amongst other things, that a proposed scheme respects and makes a positive contribution to its location and surrounds and achieves the highest standards of design. The proposal would also be contrary to the relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

11. The proposal also conflicts with the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Adopted 21 October 2009 (SPD) which states that dormer windows can have a significant effect on the appearance of a property, as well

as impacting upon the street scene as a whole and that the introduction of such extensions, where there are no other examples within the street scene will be discouraged.

Living conditions

12. The proposed rear dormer window would add built form to the rear roof slope of 48 Made Feld in addition to the extensions already completed under the previous planning permission. Nonetheless, the additional built form would be contained within the confines of the existing roof slope and would be lower than the ridge line. The positioning of the proposed rear dormer, set away from the shared boundary with 46 Made Feld along with the fact that No 48 sits higher than No 46 means that outlooks from the rear windows of No 46 would not change significantly as a result of the proposed rear dormer.

13. I note the rear garden depths of the dwellings along Made Feld and the relationship with the adjacent exchange building which is a prominent feature in existing outlooks from those garden spaces. The proposed rear dormer window would be visible from the rear garden space of No 46 and the change would be noticeable. However, given the proposed rear dormer window would be viewed in the context of the existing building and that it would appear contained within the roofslope it would not result in an overbearing feature that would have a significant additional effect on the existing outlooks of occupiers of the rear garden of No 46.

14. I therefore find that the proposal would not be harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 46 with regards to outlook. The proposal would therefore comply with policies GD1 and SP8 of the LP in so far as it relates to ensuring that proposals are designed so that they do not lead to an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses or the surrounding area. The proposal would also comply in this regard, with the relevant paragraph of the Framework, the PPG and the sections of the SPD which seek, amongst other things, to ensure that proposals do not have a detrimental effect on neighbouring properties and to ensure a high standard of amenity for existing users.

Other Matters

15. The appellant states that the appeal site is in a location with good access to services, facilities and transport links and that the proposal constitutes the effective use and optimisation of the appeal site. I recognise that there is support in the Framework for the optimisation of land and for the delivery of small sites which contribute to the housing mix of the area. However, this does not negate the requirement for new development to be designed to respond to the context of the surrounding area.

16. I acknowledge that the proposal includes the provision of two additional flats of a different design to the previously approved scheme and that the provision of the flats would provide social benefits through the provision of additional homes and economic benefits through the employment of local construction workers and future contributions to the local economy. However, given the scale of the scheme and due to the fact that the previous permission to provide the additional flats is already being carried out, these benefits would be limited and do not outweigh the harm I have identified above.

17. The appellant asserts that there would be no negative environmental or ecological impacts as a result of the proposal. The Council has not objected to the proposal on the principle of development, the proposed size of the living accommodation or private amenity space, issues relating to noise and pollution, car parking provision or waste and recycling facility provision. Even if I were to agree, a lack of harm in respect of these considerations would not weigh in favour of the proposal.

18. I note that no objections were received from interested parties, however, this has not led me to a different conclusion on the planning merits of this appeal.

Conclusion

19. The proposal is contrary to the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, which outweigh the harm. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

G Dring

INSPECTOR