



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 April 2023

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/D/23/3314460

6 The Poplars, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1PG

- 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 M Evans against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02580/FHA, dated 17 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey front, and a single storey rear, extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - The character and appearance of the area; and
 - The living conditions of adjacent occupiers, with particular regard to the outlook from, and availability of natural light to, 5 The Poplars.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The houses at The Poplars are arranged in two storey, stepped, terraces, which are set around a central green space ('the green'). Their front faces are finished in brickwork, hanging tiles and white panels or render, and whilst they display some differences at ground floor level as a result of alterations and extensions, the houses' form and materials are generally very similar. Consequently, whilst their architecture is described by the Council as unoriginal, the buildings form a cohesive, self-contained group when viewed from the green, and in glimpses from Cowper Road.
4. The proposed front extension would extend across part of the host's face, and it would be finished in matching tiles and brickwork. However, as a result of this scheme, the resultant building's form would be markedly at odds with the other houses around the green, none of which have two storey front projections. Given that it would be set back only slightly from its attached neighbour at 5 The Poplars ('No 5'), its layout, particularly at first floor, would also disrupt this terrace's distinctive and characteristic pattern of regularly stepped front faces.

5. I note that planning permission has been previously granted for a front extension here (Ref: 4/00263/16/FHA). However, as demonstrated by the drawings at page 10 of the appellants' statement, compared to it, this proposal would project slightly further forwards, and its front face measured to the top of its dormer would be taller. It would thus have a more prominent bulk in the streetscene.
6. Whilst buildings in the wider area have a fairly diverse character, and the appellants have provided photographs of two storey and first floor front extensions elsewhere, for the above reasons, the scheme would significantly harm the character and appearance of this group.
7. It would therefore conflict with those parts of Dacorum Core Strategy 2013 ('DCS') Policy CS12 which require development to integrate with streetscape character, and to respect adjoining properties with regard to matters such as layout, scale, height and bulk.
8. Paragraph 120(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework, referenced in the Council's decision, supports upward extensions to provide new homes. It is thus not relevant to this proposal. However, the scheme would conflict with the Framework's stance that development should be sympathetic to local character.

Living conditions

9. The proposed rear extension would abut the boundary with No 5 and would be around 5 metres deep in this location. However, it would have a modest height owing to its single storey, flat-roofed form, and only its upper section would be taller than the existing timber boundary fence. Moreover, no 5 is at a higher level compared to the appeal site, and its rear conservatory leads onto a raised area of decking. Consequently, whilst the scheme would slightly constrain the outlook looking out to the right from the rear of No 5 and its decking area, it would not be visually intrusive.
10. The principal parties agree that the scheme would breach a 45-degree line drawn horizontally from the centre point of No 5's adjacent windows, contrary to the stance at Appendix 3 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (2004). However, for similar reasons to those above, and on the basis of the limited available evidence, I am not persuaded that it would result in a significant loss of natural light for those occupiers.
11. The scheme would not therefore impact the living conditions at No 5 to a harmful degree. In reaching that conclusion I also note that the Council has determined that prior approval is not required for an identical rear extension at the property (Ref: 22/03517/HPA). There would not be a conflict with DCS Policy CS12's requirement for development to avoid visual intrusion and a loss of daylight and sunlight to neighbouring properties.

Other matters

12. In its favour, the scheme would provide the appellants with improved accommodation and a higher quality living environment.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. I have found that the scheme would not impact the living conditions at No 5 to a harmful degree. However, it would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the local area. The harm that the scheme would cause would not be outweighed by its limited public benefits.
14. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole and, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR