



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 June 2023

by J Hobbs MRTPI MCD BSc (hons)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/22/3296289

Keepers, High Wych, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 0LA

- 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 Matthew Waterson against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/21/2694/HH, dated 26 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 2 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is first floor extension to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for first floor extension to existing dwelling at Keepers, High Wych, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 0LA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3/21/2694/HH, dated 26 October 2021, 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 approved plan, ref. 2542/6.
 - 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.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has stated in the application form that works have already started but have not been completed. During my site visit, I observed that works were ongoing, and the proposed development had not been completed. For these reasons, throughout my decision I will refer to the works as the proposed development; however, some aspects may have already been completed and I have assessed the appeal on that basis.
3. Whilst not referred to in the reason for refusal, the development for the area includes the Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan (GANP) which is referred to in the officer report. I have therefore taken it into account in my determination of the appeal and as the appellant has referred to it in their evidence, I have not sought any further comments on the matter.

Main Issue

4. The main issue of the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises two large, detached dwellings, sited fairly close together within a triangular plot of land. The appeal site accommodates a number of outbuildings as well as a shared driveway which opens up to a small lawned area. The site is remote from other neighbouring dwellings. The wider rural area is characterised by relatively flat, open fields which are largely free from development with sporadic clusters of woodland, including one opposite the appeal site. These factors combine to create a spacious and verdant character.

The wider rural area is characterised by relatively flat, open fields interspersed with sporadic clusters of woodland, including one opposite the appeal site. Within the wider landscape, there are some pockets of residential properties surrounded by landscaping that is domestic in appearance. Overall, notwithstanding that there are some buildings, the area has an open and verdant character. However, it should be noted that the appeal site forms part of a large site that has been allocated for residential development. On the evidence before me, it is not clear whether the allocation will be delivered and across what timescale. Nevertheless, it is a material consideration in this appeal.

6. The proposed first floor extension would be constructed above the existing ground floor extension and would not alter the footprint of the building. Notwithstanding, the overall size and massing of the appeal property would increase. However, the eaves and ridge height of the proposed extension would be below the eaves and ridge height of the existing property.
7. The proposed development in combination with the previously permitted extensions, would lead to a larger property. However, the original property was a substantial residential dwelling which disrupted the spacious and verdant qualities of the rural character. The proposed development would not materially affect the rural character as it would be a relatively small extension, in relation to the original dwelling and the other extensions and would be viewed in conjunction with the two dwellings and various outbuildings. As such, it would not appear as visually dominant or as an imposing feature in the wider area.
8. The Council contend that the brickwork of the partially built side extension does not match the existing building and therefore the extension would appear incongruous. Nevertheless, a condition requiring materials of external surfaces to match the existing building would be imposed, which would ensure that the appearance of the proposed extension is in keeping with the existing extensions and the original building.
9. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development would therefore be in accordance with policies HOU11, DES4 and GBR2 of the East Herts District Plan, October 2018. These policies indicate that proposals for extensions must be of a size, scale, mass, form, siting, design and materials that are appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of

the dwelling, particularly in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt; and, all proposals must be of a high standard of design and layout to reflect and promote local distinctiveness. The proposed development would also comply with GANP Policy AG1 as it would maintain the countryside character of the landscape setting, amongst other things.

Conditions

10. The Council has indicated the conditions that it considers would be appropriate. I have considered these in light of the guidance contained within the Planning Practice Guidance and paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
11. Conditions specifying a time limit to implement the permission and the approved plan are required in the interest of certainty. A condition requiring the materials of the external surfaces to match the existing building is required in order to ensure the character and appearance of the area is conserved.

Conclusion

12. The proposed development complies with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh this.
13. Therefore, for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted.

J Hobbs

INSPECTOR