
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 July 2023

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/23/3320176

8 Glebe View, Walkern, Hertfordshire SG2 7PQ

- 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 Anthony John Packer against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/22/1562/HH, dated 21 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 7 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is a ground floor extension on the back of the property.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Walkern Conservation Area.

Reasons

1. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. Policy HA4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 (DP), Policy 3 of the Walkern Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2033 (NP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) consequently give great weight to the conservation of heritage assets including conservation areas. The conservation area is characterised by a wide variety of buildings, which fit within a traditional rural style but with a range of different sitings, forms and materials. This creates a multi-faceted yet harmonious rural character.
2. 8 Glebe View is a detached house within a late 20th Century housing development on the edge of the village and just within the conservation area. These houses are noted to be 'neutral features' in the Council's Walkern Conservation Character Analysis Map. They are handsome buildings, set out informally around the cul-de-sac with traditional proportions, features and detailing, but enough variation in materials and siting to accord with the mixed character of the conservation area. No 8 is typical of the houses here, a 2.5 storey house with a single storey pitched roof garage to the side. It sits at the

head of the cul-de-sac in a focal point for views along the street. The proposal is to convert part of the garage to annexe accommodation, with a change of one vehicular garage door to 2 person doors at the front and a large single storey extension with a zinc roof at the back.

3. The submitted drawings appear to show the 2 proposed personal doors at the front in a modern style which conflicts with the more refined, vernacular design of the rest of the frontage including the simply designed garage doors. The new doors would be prominent features, detracting from the presentation of the building in the street scene. The appellant says that the joinery details would match existing, but it appears that the existing door they would match is at the back of the garage, out of public view.
4. The proposed rear extension would be of contemporary form, style and materials, in contrast to No 8 and surrounding houses. Modern extensions can, however, sometimes be successfully added to traditionally designed buildings. In this case, although the extension would have a large footprint and irregular shape, it would be low in height and would fit comfortably within the large garden area so that it would be a subsidiary feature that would not cramp or overdevelop the site.
5. The rear extension would be tucked away at the back so that it would not readily be seen in any public views. The Council refers to views from the field to the rear, but this appears to be private land and I have seen no evidence of any public rights of way nearby. The rear extension would nevertheless be seen by neighbours and this part of the proposal is once again let down by the somewhat crude detailing shown on the submitted drawings including the new glazing and awkward, shallow pitched and asymmetrical roof. I am left unconvinced that this structure would be of sufficient quality to fit in well.
6. Although I find no objection to the conversion of the garage and to the general location and scale of the proposed rear extension, I conclude that due to the poor detailing shown on the submitted plans the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal conflicts with the shared aims of DP policies HA4, DES4, GBR2, HOU11 and HOU13, NP Policy 3 and the Framework, to protect heritage assets and to ensure that extensions are designed to a high standard which complements the surrounding area.
7. The harm to the conservation area, in the terms of Framework paragraph 199, would be less than substantial and would be towards the lower end of that broad spectrum. I note that the house is well separated from nearby listed buildings so that it would not affect their settings. I recognise the appellant's reasonable wish to improve the property and the minor contribution this would make towards the Framework's social objective of providing homes to meet the needs of present and future generations. I nevertheless give great weight to the harm that would be caused to the conservation area and, with reference to Framework paragraph 202, find no public benefits that would outweigh this harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset.
8. I have considered all other matters raised, including a neighbour's comments about living conditions and parking. I agree with the Council that there would not be any undue effects on in regard to these issues. The rear section of No 9 next door appears to gain its main light and outlook from the rear, rather than

from the ground floor side windows facing the site of the proposed extension. Privacy could be protected by a condition requiring obscure glazing of any proposed side windows and/or by fencing on the boundary. Disruption due to construction works should be a temporary. The house would retain parking spaces to the front and the proposal should not significantly increase traffic or pressure for on-street parking on this cul-de-sac.

9. For the reasons set out above in regard to the main issue, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR