
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 August 2023

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N1540/D/23/3324201

22 Elmbridge, Harlow, Essex, CM17 0JX

- 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 & Mrs J Woods against the decision of Harlow District Council.
 - The application Ref HW/HSE/23/00131, dated 24 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is a first floor extension over existing footprint, extension to porch and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the proposed porch extension.
2. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted insofar as it relates to a first floor extension over existing footprint and associated works at 22 Elmbridge, Harlow, Essex, CM17 0JX in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref HW/HSE/23/00131, dated 24 March 2023 and the plans submitted with it so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: P-4233-01, P-4233-02.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surface of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main Issue

3. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed extensions on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal dwelling is a detached house in a corner location in a street of mainly post-war semi-detached houses. It and its neighbour, No 21, appear to be newer than other houses in the street. They are similar to one another with a strong feature gable to the front elevation, a small ground floor bay and a
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feature porch. The appeal dwelling has single storey flat roofed extensions to the rear, and side facing away from Elmbridge, towards the boundary fence and open countryside beyond. It also has a loft extension with large rear dormer.

5. The corner location of the appeal dwelling, facing the side elevation of No 21, means that it is set away from the street and the front elevation is seen at an angle. The existing porch has a wide overhang which projects beyond the feature bay. However, due to the openness of this structure it does not detract from the appearance of the bay. The proposed porch would project noticeably further in front of the bay and its walls would extend under the entire roof, making it a significantly more conspicuous feature on the front elevation. Its proximity to and projection in front of the bay would detract from the significance of this feature. Moreover, owing to the angled view of the front elevation, the disproportionate depth of the porch would be readily apparent from the street, from which it would appear as an incongruous and dominant addition to the front elevation. This would materially detract from the character and appearance of the host dwelling.
6. The appellants point out that many dwellings in the street have porches and the appeal dwelling already has one. They are therefore characteristic. I would not disagree. However, the scale and design of the proposed porch would result in it dominating the front elevation and make it significantly more prominent than the existing porch or others that I saw.
7. Turning to the rear extension, this would be almost 3m deep and would extend across the rear elevation of the dwelling. It would have two gables, similar to but lower than the front gable. These would be connected by an unobtrusive section of flat roof at eaves height. Proposed fenestration at ground floor would be similar to the existing with triple panelled bi-fold doors. These would be echoed at first floor with similar openings. The existing windows in the dormer would be replaced by a single, centrally located window. Although the rear extension would introduce a more contemporary design, its limited depth and height would ensure it remained subservient to the dwelling and the more modern fenestration would be carefully arranged. The rear would not be seen in conjunction with the main façade and so any difference in style would not jar. Moreover, the evolution of buildings over time is commonplace and provided this is achieved sensitively, can preserve or enhance the character and appearance of a building, which is achieved in this case.
8. The side extension would be some 3.8m wide at the front, decreasing to about 1.7m at the rear, to align with the existing ground floor extension. It would face towards open countryside and would not be seen in the street scene. It would be clearly separated from the rear extension by a small section of flat roof, meaning it would not project beyond the original main rear façade. The roof would be pitched and set down from the main ridge with a set back from the ground floor addition on the front elevation. Overall, it would be a subservient and discreet addition.
9. The Council is concerned that the angled side wall would appear awkward and cramped. However, it would be set away from the side boundary and the angled boundary would follow the existing ground floor. The narrowing shape would not be apparent from the front and in my view would sit comfortably with the form of the host dwelling. Moreover, the section of retained flat roof would ensure

that the rear and side extensions remained discreet and did not form a wrap-around which could detract from the simple symmetry of the proposed first floor rear elevation. Finally, the Council is concerned that the lack of a window in the front elevation would result in an unsymmetrical fenestration. However, a corresponding window in this relatively small section of brickwork would either appear unduly cramped or if small would fail to reflect the scale and proportions of the window below. In view of the significant setback from the front elevation and limited size of the blank wall I therefore consider the design acceptable.

10. It is concluded on the main issue that the proposed rear and side extensions would have no materially detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the host dwelling or the surrounding area. In consequence, they would comply with Policy PL1 of the Harlow Local Development Plan (LP), 2020, which expects new development to protect, enhance or improve local distinctiveness, without restricting style or innovation, by responding to, amongst other things, scale, height, massing and architectural detailing of the surrounding area, such that it is visually attractive.
11. Notwithstanding my conclusion relating to the rear and side extensions, as set out in paragraphs 4 and 5 above, I find that the proposed porch, owing to its size and prominence, would be materially detrimental to the character and appearance of the host dwelling. In consequence, it would conflict with LP Policy PL1 and with the Harlow Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document, 2011, which expects, amongst other things, that extensions should be visually subservient to the original dwelling.
12. Since the side and rear extensions are physically and functionally severable from the proposed porch, I intend to issue a split decision in this case.
13. The Council suggests two conditions in addition to the statutory commencement condition. Insofar as they relate to the side and rear extensions, I agree that the development should be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans and in materials to match the existing building in order to protect the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area and for the avoidance of doubt.
14. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the representations of a third party regarding their loss of view across the property which carries little weight because there is no right to a view, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed in part but otherwise dismissed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR