



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2024

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/23/3334133

9 Aviemore Gardens, West Hunsbury, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN4 9XJ

- 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 Glenn David Prickett against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref WNN/2023/035, dated 5 June 2023, was refused by notice dated 12 September 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as the construction of an extension over garage creating a bedroom with en-suite and loft room above new bedroom.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. There are certain anomalies in the submitted plans relating to the floor plans and elevations of the proposed extension. There are no windows indicated serving the proposed extension at either first-floor or loft levels. However, there are windows shown on the elevations plans and I have based my considerations on this. In addition, the floor plans appear to indicate a first-floor corridor and stairs to the loft that are likely to be too narrow for purpose. Since this relates to internal configuration only, the issue has not influenced my considerations other than to increase concerns over the quality of the design.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are the effect of the proposed extension on:
 - The character and appearance of the area around Aviemore Gardens, and
 - The living conditions of the occupiers of No 10 Aviemore Gardens by way of privacy and outlook.

Reasons

4. No 9 is a detached house situated on a corner plot within a relatively modern residential estate. It has an L-shaped two storey element with a single-storey extension to the front/side that includes a garage. The proposed development would involve the construction of a first floor above the garage, which would have a pitched roof following the line of the ridge over the two-storey element. There would be a new bedroom in the first floor and another in the loft.

5. Policy Q1 of the Council's Local Plan Part 2 (LP) indicates that development should be designed to promote and contribute to good placemaking through high quality design. In particular it should respond to and enhance locally distinct townscape; should ensure that a building's form, massing and façades create character and visual interest; and ensure residents' privacy. Policy Q2 of the LP indicates that new development should not be overbearing upon existing buildings.
6. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Extensions and Alterations Design Guide (SPD) indicates that front extensions should not be obtrusive, and/or introduce prominent features in the streetscene, nor should they unduly affect neighbours' amenity; that side extensions should generally be subservient to the main dwelling with the ridge level of extensions set below the main ridge line of the original house; and that corner extensions on properties should look to preserve the character of the street.
7. The Council contends that the proposed development would be significantly prominent in the street scene, and would be significantly forward of Nos.10 and 11 Aviemore Gardens, such that the extension would appear as an obtrusive and discordant form of development, harmful to the character of the street scene. In addition, the extension would appear dominant and overbearing when viewed from the front of No 10 Aviemore Gardens, and the distance between facing first-floor windows would be only 15 metres, resulting in loss of privacy to occupants of No 10.
8. The appellant contends that other extensions to properties in the vicinity have similar characteristics, and that there have been no objections from neighbouring occupiers. He also contends that a condition to use frosted glass in the facing window of the first-floor bedroom could avoid any loss of privacy.

Character and appearance

9. No 9 is sited in a corner position at a point where Aviemore Gardens curves to the east of a small cul-de-sac that runs to the north. The cul-de-sac includes Nos 4 – 8 Aviemore Gardens. The garage at the appeal property extends from the front/side of the main dwelling to within 1 metre of the rear of the pavement. Although it is a single-storey structure, it is prominent in this position and presents a significant blank gable end to the street scene. It is set further forward on its plot than the neighbouring Nos 10 and 11 and appears as a dominant feature, especially when approaching from the south-west.
10. The first-floor extension would exacerbate the dominance of the visual impact of the gable end of the dwelling, not only by virtue of the increased height but also because it would necessitate an increase in width from that of the existing two-storey element of the house to which it would be connected. In addition, the roof ridge of the existing dwelling would be continued, such that the extension would not be seen as subordinate to the main house. Finally, the increase in overall width would result in a somewhat awkward visual relationship between the roof elements of the extension and the main house.
11. In the light of the above, I find that the extension would result in a prominent and over-dominant feature in the street scene, projecting as a two-storey element well beyond the front elevations of the neighbouring Nos 10 and 11. It would appear as an incongruous and obtrusive feature that would not enhance the streetscape, nor would it add visual interest to the host dwelling.

12. I note the other examples of first-floor extensions above garages identified by the appellant, but these are generally set further back from the road, are less prominent, and appear subordinate by virtue of the set-back and/or set-down nature of their design. They do not form precedents for the proposal at No 9.
13. In conclusion on this issue, I find that the proposed extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of both the host property and the surrounding area along this part of Aviemore Gardens. On this basis, it would conflict with Policy Q1 of the LP and with guidance in the SPD.

Living conditions

14. The appeal property is located to the south-west of No 10. The extension would be only some 15 metres away from the nearest facing windows in No 10. On this basis, there would be some loss of outlook to the occupiers of that property but, in my opinion, this would be slight, particularly given that, owing to the topography of the area, No 9 is set at a slightly lower level. Any loss of privacy could potentially be reduced by use of a suitable condition to require the east-facing window in the first-floor bedroom of the extension to be obscure-glazed. However, from the information before me, it is unclear as to the height above floor level of the roof-lights in the loft room, and this may raise other privacy matters.
15. On this issue, I find that any harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 10 would be slight, and not sufficient on their own to dismiss this appeal. However, there would be some harm, and this adds to my concern regarding the overall impact of the proposal. The extension would conflict with Policies Q1 and Q2 of the LP and with guidance in the SPD, albeit to a minor degree.

Conclusion

16. The proposed extension, by virtue of its siting, scale and design, would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. It would also be harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 10 by way of privacy and outlook, albeit that harm would be slight. Accordingly, I dismiss this appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR