

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 March 2024

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th April 2024

Appeal Ref. APP/J1915/D/23/3336160

10 Henderson Place, Epping Green, Hertford SG13 8GA

- 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 Steve Beastall against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application ref. 3/23/1821/HH, dated 26 September 2023, was refused by notice dated 21 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is *"Demolition of existing garage and side projection and construction of part single part two storey rear and side extension. Construction of front porch and rear patio. Alterations to fenestration including rear Juliette (sic) balcony."*
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The description of the proposed development in the heading above is taken from the Council's decision notice. It is more accurate than the one provided on the application form.
3. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan includes the East Herts District Plan 2018 (DP). The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions. The revised versions of that document published in December 2023 do not materially differ from earlier versions, insofar as the planning policy context around the main issue in this appeal is concerned.

Main issue

4. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. The Council found that the proposed development would not infringe the relevant local and national policies aimed at protecting Green Belt land. I see no reason to disagree. Thus, the sole main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a 2-storey detached house that is sited towards the end of a short row of detached houses located along Henderson Place, a narrow
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lane in Epping Green. The surroundings of the appeal site are otherwise resolutely rural in character. There are clear views of the front of the house from the lane.

6. The attractive front façade of the main 2-storey part of the house is symmetrical being balanced around a central first floor advanced gable which overhangs an open porch below. A single storey wing containing a double garage and utility room is attached to the northern gable end. This wing would be demolished under the appeal scheme and be replaced by the part single, part 2-storey rear and side extension.
7. Although matching bricks and slates would be used, what is proposed would be a major alteration as the 2-storey addition would be of significant bulk and mass being over 6 m wide. This would represent a percentage increase in the width of the dwelling's main 2-storey front elevation of about 60%. Despite its lower ridge height and position 1.3 m back from the existing front wall face, I share the Council's concern that the 2-storey extension would appear as an insufficiently subservient addition to the dwelling as required by DP Policy HOU11 criterion (a) and would distort the symmetrical appearance of no. 10 to an unacceptable degree.
8. No. 10 has a pitched roof with conventional gable ends. The hipped end to the 2-storey extension would look out of place and further unbalance the property, as would its lower eaves height with the first floor fenestration being set below the lines of the corresponding windows in the existing dwelling. These factors would all serve to add to the unsympathetic form and design of the extension. I would not take issue with the well-judged use of a flat roof at single storey level in itself but the proposed ground floor extension would be as wide as the original rear elevation when viewing from the rear, would wrap around the corner of the 2-storey extension and would overlap the rear walls of that extension and the original dwelling. All this would be unfortunate in design terms and would unduly emphasize the expanse of flat roof.
9. In all, unlike the obviously subordinate existing single storey wing to the northern side of no. 10, the appeal proposal would visually dominate and radically change the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, particularly when seen in public views from the front. The resulting building would take on an unduly bulky, unbalanced and disjointed appearance which would detract from its simple and balanced architectural character and disrupt its pleasant setting in the row of dwellings along Henderson Place.
10. Whilst the appellant says several similar extensions have been approved in the vicinity and that his proposal is consistent with these precedents, I have only been presented with details for 11 Henderson Place where extensions were approved under application ref. 3/18/1829/HH. In that case, the appellant focusses upon the comparative floor area increases of nos 10 and 11. The appeal scheme and the approved scheme at no. 11 would produce percentage increases in floor area of about 34% and 32% respectively.
11. Whilst those results are very similar, their principal and most relevant use is in determining whether a proposal would amount to disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building for the purposes of applying Green Belt policy. They have limited relevance in assessing wider design

considerations and in particular whether a high standard of design that is appropriate to the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings is achieved. The scheme approved at no. 11 is materially different to what is proposed at no. 10 in design terms and it is an established planning principle that each scheme should be considered on its own merits.

12. I find on the main issue that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area. As the development would not be an example of a high standard of design that reflects and promotes local distinctiveness, would fail to respect the character of the site and the surroundings and would not appear as a subservient addition to the host dwelling, there would be conflict with the aims of Policies DES4 and HOU11 of the DP. There would also be a failure to adhere to the overarching design themes of the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as they relate to achieving well-designed and beautiful places.
13. I have noted that the scheme was prepared after the refusal of an earlier planning application (ref. 3/23/0493/HH) for extensions and that an attempt has been made to address the Council's reasons for refusal of that application. I accept that there would be no adverse impacts on the amenity and living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. Sufficient on-site parking provision would remain available. The larger windows being proposed at the same time for the existing dwelling may allow for solar gain in the home, alongside improvements to outlook and daylighting conditions. I have also taken account of the absence of objections from local residents and the Parish Council. Whilst I give some weight to these other considerations, I have come to the view that they are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have described. Any revisions to the plans would need to be considered by the Council in the first instance.

Conclusion

14. My finding on the main issue is decisive to the outcome of the appeal. There is conflict with the development plan. The harm cannot be mitigated by the imposition of planning conditions and it is not outweighed by other material considerations. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that this appeal should not succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR