



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 April 2024

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24TH April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/24/3339132

31 Vantorts Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 9NB

- 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 Darren Jackson against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref, 3/23/1894/HH, dated 5 October 2023, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as removal of front bay window, rear conservatory and outbuilding. Erection of part two storey, part single storey rear extension and single storey front extension. Alterations to roof form to incorporate hip to gable roof extensions and loft conversion incorporating rear dormer. Insertion of roof light windows to front and rear, additional windows to side elevations and alterations to fenestration and external materials.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the removal of a front bay window, rear conservatory and outbuilding; the erection of a part two storey, part single storey rear extension and a single storey front extension; alterations to the roof form to incorporate hip to gable roof extensions and a loft conversion incorporating a rear dormer; the insertion of roof light windows to front and rear, additional windows to the side elevations and alterations to the fenestration and external materials at 31 Vantorts Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 9NB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3/23/1894/HH, dated 5 October 2023, 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 following approved plans: 3350/06/44 and 3210/08/43.
 - 3) Prior to the commencement of the development above floor level, details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 4) The proposed second floor window opening to the right side elevation as shown in drawing no.3210/08/43 shall be fitted with obscure glass to a minimum degree of obscurity level 3 and non-opening up to 1.7m from the floor level of the room it serves, and shall be permanently retained as such.

Procedural Matter

2. I have taken the description of the proposal from the appeal form, as that is what the appellant has used in his statement, and it corresponds with the description given by the Council in its decision.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The host property is prominently positioned at the junction of Vantorts Road with Fairway. It is orientated with its principal elevation facing Vantorts Road and it is therefore in that streetscene that the property is mainly viewed. The houses on this stretch of Vantorts Road, particularly to the south of its junction with Fairway, are set back from the road often behind landscaped frontages, and are very varied in terms of their style, form, proportions and finishes.
5. I observed on my visit that, in many cases, neighbouring houses are of a markedly different size and form. That includes nearby examples of bungalows next to hipped or gabled two storey houses, as illustrated at Figures 2 and 3 of the appellant's statement. Although the roofscape is very varied, seen from the highway differences between neighbouring houses' ridge heights are often less perceptible, owing to the angle of view, and changes in levels.
6. The proposal would include a light-coloured finish throughout, along with extensive glazing, which would give the resultant building a cohesive, contemporary appearance. Whilst the host's ridge height would be raised by around 0.5 metre, and its hipped roof would be changed to a gable, in the diverse context of the area, the resultant increased mass would not appear incongruous.
7. The adjacent bungalow at 33 Vantorts Road ('No 33') has been extended upwards to provide accommodation within its roofspace. Compared to No 33, as a result of this scheme the host would have a similar gabled form, but would have a taller ridge. However, there would be a gap above ground floor level between these two houses due to No 33's flat-roofed garage. Given the varied juxtaposition of built form in Vantorts Road, the scheme would not result in an awkward relationship between these neighbouring properties. For all the above reasons, it would not have an overly dominant appearance in the streetscene.
8. The scheme would not therefore harm the character and appearance of the area. Amongst other things, and in general terms, Policy HOU11 of the East Herts District Plan (October 2018) ('EHDP') sets out that house extensions should be of a size, scale, mass, form and materials appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the existing dwelling and/or the surrounding area, and that they should generally appear subservient.
9. Given the proposed raised ridge, the scheme cannot be said to be fully subservient to the host, but for the above reasons, the resultant dwelling would have an appropriate appearance which would respect its context. It would not therefore conflict with the overall thrust of that policy; nor with EHDP Policy DES4's requirement for a high standard of design, which respects the character of the area, and promotes local distinctiveness.

10. Turning to the matter of conditions, I have imposed the standard time limit condition and, in the interests of certainty, a condition requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.
11. The application form indicates that external materials are specified on the submitted drawings, but no such details are provided there. In the interests of good design, a condition is therefore necessary requiring the submission of those details. Finally, in order to protect the adjacent occupiers at No 33 from overlooking from the proposed secondary bedroom window, my condition No 4 is also necessary.
12. In conclusion, the scheme would not harm the character and appearance of the area, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is therefore allowed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR