
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 May 2024

by D J Barnes MBA BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 5th June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/24/3339740

110 Guessens Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 6RS

- 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 P Gilbert against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2023/2034/HOUSE, dated 3 October 2023, was refused by notice dated 6 December 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Council's decision notice and the appeal form refer to a first floor side extension, two storey rear extension and front porch. However, planning permission was previously granted for the erection of a 2-storey rear and single storey side extension, conversion of the garage and erection of a front porch (Ref 6/2023/0467/HOU). From the site visit, it appears that the rear extension has been erected and the garage converted. Accordingly, and although the porch still appears unaltered, the description of development has been adopted from the application form which refers to a first floor side extension.
3. The amendments of the National Planning Policy Framework were published in December 2023 after the determination of the appeal application. These amendments do not alter the basis upon which this appeal has been assessed.

Main Issue

4. It is considered that the main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character of appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is an altered 2-storey detached dwelling situated within the extensive Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area. Although in an area where there is a transition between architectural styles, there is a statutory duty in making planning decisions to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This duty is

echoed in Policies SADM15 and SP15 of the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Local Plan (LP).

6. In this case, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is derived from the siting of the detached and semi-detached dwellings within spacious and verdant plots. Fronting Handside Lane and Gussens Road, there are dwellings of a similar neo-Georgian design as the property which are of red brick and tile construction, possess steep hipped roofs with visually prominent angled chimney stacks and have single storey side additions. The design of the dwellings and the choice of external materials make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area's character and appearance, particularly around the junction of Handside Lane and Gussens Road.
7. The proposed development includes the erection of a first floor extension above a single storey side addition. Although set back from the front elevation of the property and possessing similar eaves height but lower ridge height than the main roof, the proposed side extension would be visible within the streetscene along Gussens Road.
8. From Gussens Road, the appeal scheme would unbalance the symmetrical appearance of the neo-Georgian designed host property at first floor and roof levels. This symmetry is a characteristic of dwellings within this part of the Conservation Area. Further, the proposed window within the front elevation would not align with a ground floor opening within the single storey addition below.
9. In conjunction with the existing 2-storey rear addition, the cumulative alterations to the host property would not be subservient in scale. The proximity of the proposed roof to the chimney stack would reduce its positive visual and physical contribution to the character and appearance of the property. As identified, angled chimney stacks are a feature within the streetscene of the Conservation Area around the junction of Handside Lane and Gussens Road.
10. At roof level, a larger crown roof form would be created which is not reflective of the predominance of hipped roofs associated with the neo-Georgian style of the property and neighbouring similarly designed dwellings. However, when compared to the current roof form above the 2-storey rear extension, the proposed crown roof would be a more sympathetic design, but this visual improvement to the property would be limited to only glimpsed views from Handside Lane. Accordingly, this matter does not outweigh the unacceptable harm which has been identified associated with the siting, scale and design of the proposed extension.
11. The proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area and this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, the public benefits which have been identified are generally short term comprising construction jobs and associated economic activity. Other benefits referenced include improved residential accommodation addressing the medical requirements of an occupier and for the appellant to be able to stay in the area, but none of these are public benefits. The public benefits which have been identified are limited in nature and do not outweigh the unacceptable harm caused to the heritage asset.

12. Examples of other side extensions have been provided by the appellant but these are of varying dates, including predating the extant Local Plan, and their full planning circumstances have not been provided. From what could be seen, none of these other examples would result in the same scale of alterations to a dwelling when compared to the proposed side extension. This assessment includes the alterations at 137 Guessens Road which is located on the opposite side of the road. For these reasons only limited weight is given to these other schemes in the determination of this appeal.
13. For the reasons given, it is concluded that the proposed side extension would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area and, as such would conflict with LP Policies SADM15, SP9 and SP15. In addition to heritage considerations, these policies also refer to developments relating to their surroundings and local distinctiveness. Accordingly, it is concluded that this appeal should be dismissed.

D J Barnes

INSPECTOR