



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 August 2024

by Ian McHugh DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/24/3339922

High Trees, Great Hormead, Buntingford, SG9 0NR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Dale Stacey against the decision of East Hertfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/23/2409/HH.
 - The development proposed is construction of single-storey side extension, two-storey rear extension, two-storey front porch addition to first floor windows and gable roof feature, one new first floor side window and alteration to one first floor side window, new rear patio, external steps and retaining wall.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for construction of single-storey side extension, two-storey rear extension, two-storey front porch addition to first floor windows and gable roof feature, one new first floor side window and alteration to one first floor side window, new rear patio, external steps and retaining wall at High Trees, Great Hormead, Buntingford, SG9 0NR in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 3/23/2409/HH, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no 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: PL01; PL02 Rev A; PL03 Rev B and PL04 Rev B.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 4) No development or groundworks shall take place until the applicant, or their agents, or their successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on both the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the Great Hormead Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a detached two-storey property, which is situated in a spacious plot, accessed via a private drive. It is well set-back from the highway and is partly screened by mature trees, which are positioned closer to the road frontage.
4. The site is within the CA, which encompasses much of the settlement of Great Hormead. Consequently, building styles, ages and layout vary. However, the space around the appeal dwelling and the mature trees on the site frontage are a distinctive characteristic. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the appeal dwelling itself is of no particular architectural or historic interest.
5. Three recent proposals for extensions to the property were refused by the Council with two subsequently dismissed at appeal. The current proposal is materially different and these decisions do not create a precedent for the current appeal.
6. The current appeal proposal is for extensive alterations and extensions to the property as described in the heading above. I acknowledge that the proposal, as a whole, could not be described as a subordinate or subservient when compared to the original/ existing dwelling and, in that regard, there is a conflict with Policy HOU11 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 (DP).
7. In addition, the Council considers that the proposal conflicts with Policies DES4, VILL2 and HA4 of the DP. These policies seek to ensure (amongst other things) that the design of new development is of a high standard; that it is in keeping with the village; and it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the CA.
8. As with most planning decisions, whether a proposal is acceptable or not is a subjective matter. In this case, whilst I have accepted that there would be a conflict with Policy HOU11 because of the overall size of the additions, this does not make the proposal unacceptable. Other material considerations must be taken into account.
9. The existing dwelling is of no merit in terms of its design and appearance and the building itself does not make a positive contribution to the significance of the CA. Whilst the proposed works would be extensive, the single -storey side extension would have little visual impact and the two-storey front porch would add some relief and interest to the property. Furthermore, whilst the two-storey rear addition would be large, it would be mostly screened by the front elevation of the dwelling and it would have little effect on the spacious setting of the property. Therefore, it would not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the CA.
10. The Council has also expressed concerns regarding the arrangement, spacing and number of windows that are proposed. Although the proposed glazing would be a dominant feature on the dwelling, I consider that arrangement to be balanced and of a scale that would not be at odds with the age and style of the property.
11. Therefore, I find that the proposal would not conflict with Policies DES4, VILL2 or HA4 of the DP, as referred to above.

Conditions

12. The Council has suggested conditions in the event of the appeal being allowed. I have imposed the standard conditions relating to the time period in which to commence the development and the list of approved plans. To ensure a satisfactory external appearance, a condition is also imposed requiring the use of external materials that match those on the existing dwelling.
13. The Council has also suggested two additional conditions in respect of archaeology and tree protection. I have noted that the Historic Environment Section at the County Council did not respond to the consultation. However, the evidence before me is that the appeal site lies within an area of 'Archaeological Significance' and for that reason, I consider that the Council's suggested condition is both reasonable and necessary.
14. The Council has also suggested that a condition be imposed requiring the retention and protection of existing trees and hedges. However, the proposed extensions would be unlikely to impact on any trees within the site. Consequently, I am not persuaded that the suggested condition is necessary.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, it is concluded that the appeal be allowed.

Ian McHugh

INSPECTOR