

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2024

by P Eggleton BSc(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/24/3345961

2 Storehouse Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9AB

- 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 Stephen Chown against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application reference is 24/00551/FPH.
 - The development proposed is a rear dormer roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is located within the Hitchin Conservation Area, which comprises the town centre and parts of the surrounding residential areas. The appeal site is located within Character Area 3: Queen Street and Hermitage Road, as identified in the Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement 2011. The statement advises that this area includes a number of late 19th century 'positive' paired cottages in Storehouse Lane. The appeal property and its neighbour represent such a pair of cottages with a roofscape that remains largely unaltered.
 4. A previous appeal, APP/X1925/W/19/3238313, related to a larger dormer which was not found to be acceptable. Care has been taken in the design of the newly proposed dormer; and with regard to its materials, in order to reduce its dominance and to give it a more sympathetic form and appearance. However, it would still appear overly large; it would not reflect the scale or positions of the windows below; and it would dominate the roof of this cottage. It would represent a prominent new feature that would detract from the simple form of these two properties. Given that the rear of the house is clearly evident and prominent in views from the adjacent Lyles Row, which is a popular pedestrian route, the proposal would not represent a suitable design in this specific context. It would detract from the appearance of these cottages and the wider
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area. It would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

5. There are larger dormer windows on a number of properties within this row of houses. The applications date back to 2004 and 2009 and I am not certain that the same policy position was applicable. In any event, they differ significantly from this proposal as they are less prominent in public views and as such, have a lesser impact on the wider conservation area. These developments are not positive features and do not offer significant weight in favour of this proposal. Reference has been made to a number of other approved developments, some in and some outside, the conservation area. I have not found any of these to be directly comparable and must, in any event, consider this proposal on its own merits.
6. I have had regard to the statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. The *National Planning Policy Framework* 2023 is clear that any harm to a heritage asset, such as a conservation area, should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The harm to the conservation area would be less than substantial. Whilst I acknowledge the benefits with regard to the need for the extended accommodation and improved living space for the appellant's children; the high quality materials; and the investment that would result, I am not satisfied that there are sufficient public benefits to outweigh the harm to the conservation area. In addition to the conflict with the heritage requirements of the *Framework*, the proposal would also be at odds with the design and heritage requirements of policies D1(a&bi), D2(a) and HE1(c) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (2022).
7. I have had regard to the personal circumstances of the family of the appellant and the benefits with regard to the improved and extended accommodation. I am also mindful that no objections to the proposal were received. Whilst there are a number of matters that weigh in favour of allowing alterations to the property, they are not sufficient to outweigh my concerns. I therefore dismiss the appeal.

Peter Eggleton

INSPECTOR