



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 October 2024

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P1940/D/24/3352236

95 Wolsey Road, Moor Park, Hertfordshire HA6 2ER

- 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 Rikin Patel against the decision of Three Rivers District Council.
 - The application reference is 24/0796/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a double storey wrap around extension, reconstruction of the roof and internal re-configuration.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a mainly 2-storey detached dwelling on a tree-lined residential street along which buildings vary in scale, size and design. It falls within the Moor Park Conservation Area (CA). Accordingly, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA as required by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended.
4. From the evidence before me, the significance of the CA partly derives from its origin as a low-density area of detached 2-storey houses in good sized plots that were mostly built between 1920 and 1950. The properties along Wolsey Road exemplify these features. I saw that dwellings along this highway are generally set back from the road behind landscaped gardens with partly open frontages, which combine to give the street scene a spacious verdant feel.
5. The plans and photographs provided of the existing dwelling before construction works started on site show a building of simple design with brick walls, a dual pitched main roof, an off-centre main entrance and single storey projections at the front, side and rear. No 95 is not a listed building nor does it have any obvious architectural or visual merit. Nevertheless, the appeal dwelling typifies the type and layout of properties within this part of the CA and so it does reflect the historical growth of the area. On balance, I consider that the appeal dwelling neither adds to, nor detracts from, the character and

appearance of the CA. Its contribution to the significance of the designated heritage asset is, therefore, neutral.

6. The proposal is to enlarge and alter the dwelling with extensions on 3 sides together with the introduction of a new roof form, front and rear dormers, relocation of the front entrance, new windows and a remodeling of the internal layout. Whether the scheme amounts to a substantial demolition or loss of the existing property, as the Council states, the works proposed are extensive. If the appeal scheme were to proceed, the size and general appearance of the completed dwelling would bear little resemblance to its existing counterpart.
7. That said, planning policy does not necessarily preclude such an approach nor does the age of the original property as being pre-1958. Policy DM3 of the Council's Development Management Policies Local Development Document (DMP) notes, however, that development within conservation areas will only be permitted if the scale and design preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area. Appendix 2 of the DMP states that extensions to properties must not be excessively prominent in relation to adjacent properties or to the general street scene. It adds that the character of the property and the street scene must also be respected.
8. The submitted design aims to transform the original house with its later piecemeal extensions into a single homogenous entity with a broad symmetry to the built form, roof shape and pattern of fenestration. The flat roof elements of the existing building would be removed and the external materials to be used could be covered by a condition. However, the proposal would result in a significantly larger dwelling and gain prominence in the street scene compared to the existing dwelling. The considerable width of the new 2-storey front elevation, together the long, continuous ridge and eaves lines facing the road, deep flank walls and dormer extensions would, in combination, visually accentuate the size and bulk of the new building notwithstanding its new hipped roof form.
9. In views along a short section of Wolsey Road, the lengthy 2-storey front facade of the finished dwelling would be evident, as would the considerable expanse of new roof slope, 2 dormer extensions, blank upper sidewalls and uninterrupted rooflines. Although reasonable gaps would be retained between the dwelling and the side boundaries of the site, the proposal would still draw the eye from the road as being overly large for the plot and significantly deeper than the dwellings on either side. As a result, the completed dwelling would stand uncomfortably in the local street scene and be overly prominent even with new planting at the front of the site and when seen among the varied built form that is a feature of the streetscape. To my mind, the physical presence of the finished building 'on the ground' would be greater than might be implied from the appellant's street scene drawing, which is obviously 2 dimensional and taken from a particular viewpoint. For all these reasons, the proposed development would be obtrusive and an unwelcome addition to the local area.
10. Based on the statistics provided by the appellant, the dimensions and site coverage of the proposed development would compare favourably with other properties along Wolsey Road. Photographs also support the appellant's view that the footprint and massing of the proposal would be smaller than several other buildings. The appellant also considers that the width and site coverage of the proposal would not exceed the thresholds identified in the Moor Park

Conservation Area Appraisal, which the Council contests. Even so and acknowledging that the numerical analysis provides a helpful guide to the spatial characteristics of the area, the main determining factor is whether the appeal scheme would integrate with the prevailing character and appearance of the local area. For the reasons given, it would not do so. As a result, the character and appearance of the CA would fail to be preserved.

11. Reference is made to recent planning decisions to approve sizeable extensions to other properties and a replacement dwelling on Wolsey Road. In my experience, it is rare that one development can be directly compared with another because local circumstances between them often differ. From the background details and plans provided, none of the cases cited appear to be the same or very similar to the appeal scheme. On that basis, I am unable to attach more than limited weight to these examples in support of the appeal.
12. Given the considerable size of the CA, the harm would be less than substantial. In those circumstances, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that the harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. I note that measures would also be employed to ensure that the completed dwelling would be energy efficient. Additional soft landscaping within the site would offer an opportunity to encourage biodiversity. Both measures could have a wider public benefit. However, these benefits do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
13. On the main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Council's Core Strategy and DMP Policies DM1, DM3 and DM6 and Appendix 2 of this document. Together, these policies require developments to preserve or enhance local character and safeguard conservation areas. It also conflicts with the Framework which requires development to be sympathetic to local character, add to the overall quality of the area and protect heritage assets.

Other matters

14. The Officers Report records that the Directors of Moor Park (1958) Limited raise no objection. I agree that the living conditions of others would not be adversely affected. The proposal would make efficient use of land within the site, which is in an accessible location. However, these matters do not outweigh the identified harm.

Conclusion

15. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR