



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2025

by **P Terceiro BSc MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 FEBRUARY 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/W/24/3349837

Ash House and Birch House, Stanstead Road, Hunsdon SG12 8FF

- 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 Mitchell Grimwood against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/24/0880/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of first floor side extension above garage to both Ash House and Birch House.
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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 buildings and of the area.

Reasons

3. Ash House and Birch House are two detached dwellings which display a handed design. The dwellings have steep pitched roofs and are linked to their pitched roof side garages by a flat roofed hall. The garages are set back from the front elevations of the dwellings.
4. The wider housing estate is of a contemporary design. Generally, the dwellings are detached and have one and half or two storeys, with some common features such as pitched roofs and attached single storey elements to the side. Rows of terraces are also present. As such, while there is some variation in terms of the size, design and appearance of the dwellings, they provide a distinctive group of well designed, harmonious buildings. The appeal properties are situated by the entrance to the cul-de-sac and their rear elevations are visible from Ellison Close, so they occupy a prominent position in the street scene. There are open fields to the south of the development and on the opposite side of Stanstead Road.
5. The proposal seeks to construct first floor extensions of a similar design above the garages of Ash House and of Birch House. While the extensions would be set back from the main front elevation of their host dwellings and set down from the main ridge with lower eaves, given their overall size and scale the extensions would add considerable bulk and mass to their host dwellings. As such, the extensions would detract from the prominence of their main house and appear as a competing element to their host dwelling, thereby harming the character of the host buildings.

6. Even though their design would reflect the simple pitched roof of their hosts and the materials would be appropriate, the proposal would result in the loss of the single storey element to the side, which is a particular feature of the dwellings within the estate. Consequently, the pleasant rhythm created by the dwellings and their attached garages would be harmfully disrupted by the proposed development because of the bulk of the extensions. As such, and while the Framework supports upwards extensions, the proposal would be at odds with the form of neighbouring properties within the estate.
7. Due to its scale and siting, the extension to Birch House would be prominent in the street scene, since this property occupies a corner plot by the entrance to the cul-de-sac. The extension to Ash House would substantially erode the gap between this dwelling and the adjacent terrace, thereby resulting in the loss of this distinctive design feature that is important in maintaining the detached character of Ash House.
8. I understand that the proposal follows a previous planning application which was refused by the Council. This application related to a first-floor extension to Ash House only. While it may be the size of the extension has been reduced and the scheme would include Birch House, as set out above, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character of the area in its own right.
9. While not referenced in the reason for refusal, reference is made to Policy HHD6 of the Hunsdon Area Neighbourhood Plan 2019 – 2033 (NP), which sets out guidelines for new development within the NP area. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwellings and of the area, so the scheme would not be supported by this policy.
10. Therefore, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host buildings and of the area. It would conflict with Policies DES4 and HOU11 of the East Herts District Plan (2018) which seek a high standard of design and layout that promote local distinctiveness, and support development that is of a size, scale and siting that are appropriate to the character of the dwelling and surrounding area.

Other Matters

11. Whilst the proposal would improve the living conditions of the current and future residents of the dwellings, I remain to be convinced that the appeal scheme is the only means of doing so. The size of the existing dwellings would increase, but there is no substantive evidence before me in relation to the housing needs of the area by type or size. As such, this has limited influence on this appeal.
12. I acknowledge the support comments by local residents. However, these would not overcome the harm that I have identified.
13. The proposal would be acceptable in terms of its effect on living conditions of the adjoining neighbours and highway safety. However, these are neutral matters in my consideration of this appeal.

Conclusion

14. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

P Terceiro

INSPECTOR