The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 November 2018

by J A B Gresty MA MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th December 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/18/3211092
38 York Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1XB

- 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 Dan and Mrs Liz Anderson against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
- The application Ref 18/01406/FPH, dated 19 May 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 July 2018.
- The development proposed is loft conversion to include rear dormer and roof windows to front roof elevation, roof ridge line raised and concrete roof times replaced with slate roof tiles.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is an attractive two-storey, semi-detached house. The pair of houses has a symmetrical, designed appearance with distinctive two-storey bay windows in the front elevation. The houses have conventional pitched and mono-pitched tiled roofs. York Road is characterised by similarly designed and sized, semi-detached and terraced, two-storey houses which contribute to the road having an attractive and planned appearance.

4. The proposed development would include extension of the main house roof which would include raising the height of the rear elevation of the roof to form a flat-roofed extension which would span the whole width of the appeal property. The flat-roof would project above the height of the existing ridge and stand above the height of the ridge of the adjoining house. When viewed from the road, the projection of the roof above the ridge would give the pair of houses an unbalanced appearance and would give the existing chimney, which is a distinctive feature of the property, a truncated and incongruous appearance. The loss of symmetry and the development's incongruous appearance would detract from the character and appearance of the host property and the pair of houses as a whole, harming the character and appearance of York Road.

5. From the road, there would be oblique views of the side elevation of the extended roof. its flat roof design would give the extension a bulky, box-like appearance which would be at odds with the scale and design of the host property and would be out of keeping with the prevailing character and appearance of the residential development on York Road.

6. The appeal property has a two-storey rear projection. The top of the roof of the projection is significantly lower than the ridge height of the main house roof. The appeal proposal includes construction of a flat-roofed extension over part of the rear projection which would form part of the extension of the main house roof. The rear projection extension's flat-roof would project above the height of the neighbouring house roofs. Because of its size and box-like design, the extension of the rear projection would appear very large and out of keeping with the rear elevations of the host property and adjoining semi-detached house. Cumulatively, the extensions of the main house and rear projection roofs would give the rear and side elevations of the appeal property an unduly prominent, bulky and stark appearance which would be at odds with the prevailing character and appearance of the local area.

7. There are large flat-roofed roof extensions to several nearby properties which are visible from the appeal property's back garden. However, in the main these developments do not complement the design or appearance of their host properties or contribute positively to the character and appearance of the local area. Each case must be considered on its own merits and these other flat-roofed roof extensions add little weight in favour of the proposed development.

Conclusions

8. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area. Also, decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment. The proposed extensions would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and local area and would not accord with the requirements of Policy 28 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations Saved Policies – September 2007. Nor would the development comply with Policy D2 of the North Hertfordshire Emerging Local Plan 2011-2031 which does not weigh in the proposal's favour. Accordingly, with regard to the design of the proposed development, it would not represent sustainable development as sought by the Framework.

9. The proposed development would provide useful additional living accommodation for the appellants and their family. In this respect the development would create a better place for the appellants to live. However, in this case, the benefit the development would provide to the appellants would not outweigh the harm the development would do to the character and appearance of the host property and local area. Therefore, on balance and for the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J A B Gresty

INSPECTOR