
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 February 2019

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 February 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/18/3217335
25 Stockens Green, Knebworth, SG3 6DQ

- 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 Tim Wild against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02306/FPH, dated 6 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 31 October 2018.
 - The development proposed is erection of a single storey rear extension and rear dormer window to facilitate loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the rear dormer on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area, including the Stockens Green, Knebworth Conservation Area (CA)

Reasons

3. The appeal proposal includes a single storey rear extension. The Council raises no objection to this part of the proposal and planning permission was granted for a single storey rear extension on 19 December 2018. I agree that this part of the proposed development would be acceptable. I shall therefore restrict my further consideration to the proposed rear dormer.
 4. Stockens Green lies within the Stockens Green, Knebworth CA. It is a planned, early 20th century residential area, laid out on "garden suburb" principles, in part around a lozenge shaped green and with wide verges on the approach from Gun Lane. The setting is spacious and leafy with mature trees and strong hedgerows. Dwellings are mostly semi-detached or in short terraces and whilst there is variety of design the overarching architectural style is similar. In particular, strong roof form, low first floor eaves and small dormers at first floor are characteristic
 5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that conservation areas are designated heritage assets. When considering the impact of a
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proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, the NPPF advises that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed through alteration of the heritage asset or development within its setting.

6. The appeal dwelling and No 23, its semi-detached pair, are situated facing one end of the green and at 90 degrees to the main street. The rear of the dwellings is clearly visible on the approach to the green from Gun Lane. They are in keeping with other dwellings in the street with low eaves, a strong roof form and first floor accommodation contained partly within the roof. They are identified on the CA plan as making a positive contribution to the CA. Whilst at ground floor the backs of the houses are predominantly hidden behind a dense hedgerow, the rear roofs are prominent in the street scene. These incorporate a characteristic semi-dormer which breaks the line of the eaves and at No 23 a rear dormer that occupies about half of the rear roof slope and is located above the semi-dormer. It is set down from the ridge and there is a clear separation between it and the semi-dormer.
7. The proposed dormer at No 25 would be further from the street than the existing dormer at No 23 but nonetheless clearly visible. It would occupy almost the entire width of the roof and would extend down to meet the flat roof of the existing semi-dormer. Although it would be set down from the ridge it would be a dominant and incongruous feature, significantly altering the appearance of the roof and diminishing that of the semi-dormer. Overall, this would detract from the character and appearance of the dwelling and, since this makes a positive contribution to the CA, would also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
8. The appellant suggests that the Council does not give specific guidance on rear dormers but that the proposed dormer would respect the scale and architecture of the dwelling, being set up from the eaves, down from the ridge and in from the sides of the roof. However, it would be a large, boxy structure, occupying a significant part of the rear roof slope. Moreover, the lack of any gap between the proposed dormer and the existing semi-dormer would serve to exacerbate the harm.
9. The appellant draws my attention to other dormers in the street scene. However, these appear mostly to be original and are small in scale, located at first floor and have hipped tiled roofs. A new first floor dormer at No 21 reflects the scale and design of existing dormers and is not therefore comparable with the proposed box dormer.
10. I have taken account of the existing box dormer at No 23. However, whilst that may provide a precedent for a rear dormer extension, the appeal proposal is significantly larger and less sympathetic to the host dwelling and cannot therefore be justified by this existing development.
11. It is concluded on the main issue that the proposed rear dormer would have a materially harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stockens Green, Knebworth CA. Although the harm to the CA

would be less than substantial, there would be no discernible public benefit in allowing the proposed dormer that would outweigh this harm.

12. In consequence the proposed development would not amount to sustainable development because it would conflict with saved Policies 28 and 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations, 2007, emerging Policies D2 and HE1 of the draft Local Plan 2011-2031, and the NPPF. Taken together these expect house extensions in CAs to achieve good design that is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, such that it is sympathetic to the existing dwelling in terms of, amongst other things, form and proportions and makes a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness so as to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA.
13. The appeal proposal includes a single storey rear extension which I have found to be acceptable. I have considered whether I should issue a split decision to allow this part of the development. However, that is not necessary because the evidence shows that the Council has already granted permission ref. 18/03237/LDCP for a single storey rear extension.
14. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the lack of any representations from neighbours or the parish council, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR