

David Ames
Executive Director Stewardship and Development
Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
One Garden City
Broadway
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire SG6 3BF

22 SEP 2023

21st September 2023

Dear David

Appeal reference RR/2023/017
34 Pasture Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 3LS

Please find enclosed my decision on the above appeal. A copy has been sent to the appellant.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ruth Reed'.

Ruth Reed BA DipArch MA PGCertEd PPRIBA HonAIA FRIAS
Independent Scheme of Management Inspector

Appeal Decision

Site visit made 13 September 2023

By Ruth Reed BA DipArch MA PGCertEd PPRIBA HonAIA FRIAS

An Independent Scheme of Management Inspector
Appointed by the Heritage Foundation Letchworth Garden City

Decision date 21 September 2023

Appeal Reference RR/2023/017

34 Pasture Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 3LS

- The appeal is made by Mr Bachra against refusal of consent under the Scheme of Management of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for the application submitted on 27 October 2022.
 - Consent for the scheme was refused by the Heritage Foundation's Heritage Advice Service on 5 January 2023. It was reviewed by the Advisory Management Committee on 11 May 2023 and the decision to refuse was upheld.
 - The development proposed is replacement roof, front two and rear single storey extension including external cladding and replacement windows.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed against the refusal of the parts of the application for external cladding and replacement windows. The parts of the application for replacement roof, two front two-storey extensions and rear single-storey extension are allowed subject to approval of external materials and windows.

Preliminary matters

2. The original application was for replacement roof, two front two-storey extensions and a rear single-storey extension including external cladding and replacement windows.
3. At the site visit it was agreed that there was no objection to the form of the rear single storey extension.
4. An application approved in 2019 permitted a front garage extension with dormer window, a rear extension and other alterations.

5. Reference has been made by the appellant to planning approval from North Hertfordshire District Council reference 22/02791/FPH, while this is noted, the decision is made solely on the basis of the Design Principles set out by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation which generally indicate what and will not be acceptable. However, each case is made on its own merits based on the character of the property and its context. This decision is based on the Guidance for Modern Character Areas.

Main Issues

6. The main issues in this case are the impact of the extensions, raising the roof, and changes to windows and external finishes on the character and appearance of the house itself, and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. 34 Pasture Road is a detached house. It is situated in a Modern Character Area and is not a Home of Special Interest. It has buff brick elevations with hanging plain tiles to first floor panels to the front and rear elevations. The gable feature to the front elevation and the glazed door screen to the first-floor balcony to the rear have white spandrel panels.
8. Pasture Road is notable for its diverse styles of modern architecture covering a period of over fifty years. 34 Pasture Road is one of the earlier house types. It is notable for the shallow pitch of the roof, the long narrow plan, the use of long shallow windows and diverse features such as the scalloped porch to the front elevation which give it a slightly awkward and inharmonious appearance.
9. The appeal proposal includes a revised front garage extension. This would extend no further forward than that approved on the 2019 approval, but the roof form would be altered to a one and a half storey block with a duo pitch roof instead of the catslide and dormer previously approved.
10. The revised roof would have greater bulk than the catslide but as the house is set down below the level of the road and footpath it would not appear much higher than a single storey block and would not be a harmful addition to the street scene in terms of its massing.
11. The upwards extension of the staircase block on the front extension also has more mass than the existing block but extends no further forward in plan than the existing house. The existing two storey projecting dormer feature adjacent to the stair block is to be omitted on the appeal proposal, in part compensating for increasing the height of the staircase block with a gabled roof.

12. The Design Principles for Modern Character Areas state: *'Proposals for front additions will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that they will not cause harm to the appearance of the existing property or its group'*.
13. The two proposed front extensions would not cause harm to the appearance of existing property in terms of their form if the increase in pitch to the main roof is accepted. They would then meet the criteria in terms of their form set down in the Design Principles:
 - *Front extensions shall be consistent with the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and matching materials, and have balanced proportions and scale;*
 - *Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the appearance of a building and the street scene; therefore, all proposed roof pitches and design of the roof and roof line shall be consistent with the original roof design of the house*
14. The significant change proposed is the raising of the pitch of the roof of the house. The Design Principles for Modern Character Areas state that *Changes to the style and height of a roof will not normally be acceptable*. The context of the house is the northern and western parts of the loop of Pasture Road where significant changes to the form and the height of roofs have been approved over the years. This suggests that this is an isolated part of the Garden City where significant changes to existing houses have been acceptable, contrary to the normal requirements of the Design Principles.
15. 34 Pasture Road sits on the internal corner of the loop and is set down below the level of the road on the northern side. Its shallow roof and pale, weathered material palette give it a low visual impact in comparison to the larger altered and extended houses across the road. Given the change in character that these properties have brought to the street it is reasonable to accept that 34 Pasture Road can also be altered and given more prominence, and these changes could include raising the pitch.
16. Raising the pitch will remove the mid-century design characteristics of the original house, however given the unsatisfactory visual characteristics of the original building this can be an acceptable change.
17. The appeal proposal is not acceptable in terms of its materials palette and the shape and distribution of some of the new windows. Once approved and constructed this will be a more visually prominent house on a street of individual and distinctive houses that are generally of a very high standard of design. It is in an isolated area of the Garden City where individuality rather than harmony of style is the predominant characteristic. The standard of design is therefore required to be high to justify the radical changes to the existing house that depart from the Design Principles.

18. The windows on the garage extension are disproportionately large to light a garage and the ensuite above and they would be intrusive to people passing on the footpath. The Design Principles require *Positioning, type and size of new openings shall be consistent with the original design of the property and style of the original windows*. The pattern, size and location of the windows on the garage extension are not acceptable in the scheme presented.
19. The Design Principles state: *Roof lights can improve natural light and ventilation. However, any dormers and/or roof lights can have a significant visual impact and will be carefully considered*. The pattern, number and distribution of the rooflights on the rear roof slope visible from the road are unacceptable as the resultant appearance is cluttered. The rooflights on the front roof slope appear to be unnecessary and the elevation would be simpler and cleaner in appearance without them.
20. Despite the diverse styles and forms of the houses on this part of Pasture Road there is a constancy of tone and hue to the colour palette of the external finishing materials. The majority of the houses have no more than two materials on the external walls. The colours of these materials are generally muted tones of buff and brown. White is generally reserved for detailing and some spandrel panels. There is very little use of white render and dark cladding but where these do occur, they are usually in association with one other walling material only. This brings a degree of harmony to what could otherwise become a chaotic street scene.
21. The proposed palette of walling material for the appeal scheme at 34 Pasture Road is the original buff brick to areas of the ground floor, dark cladding to the first-floor walls and white render to the front extensions. The high contrast between the white render and the dark cladding would over emphasise these extensions and whilst they are acceptable in terms of form in the street scene, the white render would make them too dominant.
22. The Design Principles require that *Front extensions shall be consistent with the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and matching materials, and have balanced proportions and scale*.
23. As proposed the palette of materials is unacceptable both in terms of the appearance of the house and its impact on the surrounding area.

Conclusions

24. Having read the submissions and seen the site and its context, I conclude that the changes to the form of the two forward extensions and the raising the roof pitch are acceptable as an exceptional departure from the design principles in the context of the existing house and the immediate area in which it is located. The two front extensions and the raised roof pitch are approved in this respect

Appeal Decision RR/2023/017 34 Pasture Road

only. The appeal in respect to these aspects of the proposal and the rear extension is approved.

25. The choice of external wall materials and number, size and distribution of the new glazing elements to the garage extension and the roof are not approved. The appeal in respect to these aspects of the design is dismissed.

Ruth Reed

Independent Scheme of Management Inspector