

Appeal Decision

Site visit made 16 September 2021

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

Decision date 29 September 2021

Appeal Reference RR/2021/011

11 Fouracres, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 3UF

- The appeal is made by [REDACTED] against refusal of consent under the Scheme of Management of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for the application submitted on 11 November 2020.
 - Consent was refused by the Heritage Advice Service on 3 December 2020. It was reviewed by the Advisory Management Committee on 11 March 2021 and the decision to refuse was upheld.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion above existing garage and addition of dormer to create additional bedroom. Ground floor extension to create larger kitchen.
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Decision

1. The appeal against the refusal of an application for loft conversion above existing garage and addition of dormer to create additional bedroom is dismissed. The appeal against refusal of the ground floor extension to create larger kitchen is allowed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The house sits at 45 degrees to the line of the road. For clarification the west elevation containing the garage doors is described as the front elevation and the north elevation with the front door is described as the front-side elevation. In terms of the requirements of the Design Principles for Modern Character Areas both of these elevations could be considered both front and side elevations and the impact has been considered for each has been considered in terms of both.
3. The long elevation facing the garden is described as the rear elevation.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this case is the impact the proposed alterations to the garage roof would have on the character and appearance of the area and the house itself.

Reasons

5. 11 Fouracres is a two-storey dwelling with single storey garage on the frontage and a single storey lean-to extension to the rear. The garage has been linked to the house with a single storey link.
6. The proposed alterations to the garage roof are described as a loft conversion. As submitted, the proposal is to replace the single-storey, equal pitched roof with a new roof construction, retaining the eaves height over the garage doors, increasing the pitch of the roof, and off-setting the ridge to create a one-and-a-half storey eaves height to the rear.
7. At the site visit the existing garage was largely screened from views from the north by mature trees and a hedge. The proposed roof extension would be screened from this direction in summer months but is likely to be visible in leaf-off conditions. The new roof pitch, visible from this direction, would be in conflict with the character of the original house which has a shallow pitched roof. This is contrary to the Design Principles for front and side extensions.
8. Other houses in the area have steeper pitches to the garages than those to the main houses, however I saw none that also have an off-set ridge. This proposal would introduce a new roofline to the street scene and not be in character with the area.
9. The garage is visible from the west and the gable of 10 Fouracres can be seen behind it. Raising the ridge of the garage would not result in closing a gap in the frontage or significant overshadowing to the garden of 10 Fouracres. It would, however, increase the mass of the building when viewed from the road to the west.
10. 11 Fouracres is unusual within the area because the house is close to the back-edge of the pavement. This is the consequence of an earlier two-storey extension to the front-side elevation. The area around the house on the frontage is less spacious than the neighbouring properties. Increasing the mass of the building by extending the garage roof upwards would increase the cramped appearance of the house.
11. The roof extension would be made more prominent by the introduction of a large dormer window containing a window taller than the those on the adjacent front-side elevation.

12. Considering the proposal as a side extension, the Design Principles require two-storey side extensions to be 2 metres from the boundary, the existing garage is on the boundary. Although the proposal is not for a full two-storey extension it would make the relationship with the adjoining property more cramped.
13. As a front extension it would fail to respond to and harmonise with the individual qualities of the existing house and its setting and therefore not be in accordance with the Design Principles.
14. The needs of the family are understood but do not amount to special circumstances that would be sufficient to over-ride the Design Principles.
15. The proposed rear extension would not cause harm to the appearance of the house and would have minimal effect on the overall plot development. Little or no harm would arise from this element of the proposal.

Conclusions

16. Having read the submissions and seen the site and its context I conclude that the proposed alterations to the garage roof would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area and to the house itself. This aspect of the proposal is not in accordance with the Design Principles for Modern Character Areas. The appeal for the loft conversion above existing garage and addition of dormer to create additional bedroom is dismissed.
17. Little or no harm has been identified that would result from the rear extension and the appeal for this aspect of the proposal is allowed.

Ruth Reed

Independent Scheme of Management Inspector