

Appeal Decision

Site visit made 16 May 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 23 May 2023

Appeal Reference RR/2023/014

17 Pasture Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 3LP

- The appeal is made by _____ against refusal of consent under the Scheme of Management of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for the application submitted on 7 January 2022 and subsequently revised.
 - Consent for the revised scheme was refused by the Heritage Foundation's Householder Applications Committee on 15 July 2022. It was reviewed by the Advisory Management Committee on 10 November 2022 and the decision to refuse was upheld.
 - The development proposed is: Two storey rear extension, two-storey side extension and first floor extension above part of garage alterations to roof line and fenestration (revised scheme).
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Decision

1. The appeal against the refusal of an application for two storey rear extension, two-storey side extension and first floor extension above part of garage alterations to roof line and fenestration (revised scheme) is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. A proposal to extend and alter this property were considered at appeal ref RR/2021/010 dated 29 September 2021. The proposal was dismissed on the basis that there was insufficient information to confirm the height of the roof alterations and their impact on the street scene and that the side and rear extensions were harmful to existing character of the house and not in accordance with the Design Principles for Modern Character Areas.
3. A revised scheme was first submitted on 7 January 2022. This was subject to further revisions which retained the same drawing numbers. The scheme considered by Householder Applications Committee on 15 July 2022 was based

on drawings consistent with those submitted with the appeal statement of case. They are PO1, PO2, PO3 and PO4 all dated June 2022. I have made my decision based on these drawings.

4. Reference has been made by the appellant to the planning consent for the original scheme granted by North Hertfordshire District Council. Grant of planning consent does not imply automatic compliance with the Design Principles that underpin an approval by the Heritage Foundation. The tests of design and appearance are different from those made by the Planning Authority.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this case are the impact of the proposals to the scale and appearance of the house itself, and the impact of the alterations on the street scene and the character of the area.

Reasons

6. 17 Pasture Road is a two-storey dwelling with a one-and-a-half storey garage to the front, a single storey side extension providing a conservatory to the north, and single storey full width lean-to extension to the rear elevation with a sunroom extension central to this. The house has a hipped roof with brick gables. The front and rear elevations have tile hanging to the first floor and the ground floor of the front elevation is rendered.
7. The drawings for the revised scheme provide an accurate representation of the existing house and confirmation that the ridge of the altered house would not be higher than the existing. They are now sufficiently accurate to assess whether the proposals are in accordance with the Design Principles for a Modern Character Area.
8. It was confirmed at the site visit that all the remaining facing brickwork, the render and the tile hanging to the front elevation would be replaced with new brickwork. The house would be finished in new brickwork to all walls except the new gable to the north elevation which would be rendered.
9. Stone surrounds would be provided to all windows on the front and side elevations and to the casement windows on the rear elevation. The new bi-fold doors to ground and first floor on the rear elevation would have stone lintols. All the remaining existing windows will be replaced with new ones with powder coated aluminium frames in grey and no window bars.
10. There would be hip-to-gable extensions to the main house roof and the garage roof raised to just below the main house ridge to create a full storey extension

over the garage. The pitch of the new roof over the garage would be shallower than the main house roof.

11. A substantial two storey extension approximately 7m deep would replace the single storey extension across the rear of the house with an inset on the southern side at first floor level. There would be two rear gables and a crown roof over the extension. The overall depth of the house would be approximately double the depth of the existing house, coming within 1.5m of the property boundary at the south-eastern corner.
12. There would be a two-storey side extension to the north elevation running along the boundary from the end of the garage, replacing the conservatory and forming a wrap-around with the rear extension.
13. The proposed work amounts to a substantial reconstruction but still comes under the Design Principles for home alterations rather than for a replacement dwelling. The site is in a Modern Character Area and the design principles set out in the November 2020 version of the guide should be applied here unless there are special circumstances that suggest otherwise.
14. For the changes to the external materials and windows, the guide state that *Groups of buildings, that were designed and built together, are particularly vulnerable to changes of colour on façades - disrupting the sense of unity.* There is a diversity in building materials in Pasture Road and, although the house is similar to number 19 adjacent, there is no consistency of style to protect, and the change of materials is acceptable within the Design Principles.
15. The Design Guide says of roof extensions:
 - *Changes to the style and height of a roof will not normally be acceptable*
 - *Roof alterations shall reflect the original roof design and specifications*

The height of the roof will not change except for the front first floor extension over the garage however, the hip-to-gable extension would change the style of the main roof adding to the bulk and mass of the dwelling when seen from the road. The proposed roof extensions would be detrimental to the house itself and the street scene and not in accordance with the Design Principles.

16. The change in roof pitch over the garage extension does not reflect the original roof design. The Design Principles state:
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

Because of the impact on the appearance of the house the upwards front extension over the garage is not in accordance with the Design Principles.

17. For rear extensions the Design Principles state that '*The area and volume of the proposed extension shall be in proportion to the existing house and plot*'. The proposed scheme is for a substantial rear extension that is out of proportion to the existing house although there is sufficient depth within the plot to accommodate it. There is however insufficient width. The rear extension would project sufficiently far to become close to the boundary on the south-eastern corner as the plot tapers, making the proposal appear cramped within the plot.
18. The Design Principles state:

Extensions to houses on very large plots may exceed 5 metres from the original main rear building line, if it can be demonstrated that there is negligible effect on the neighbouring property and it is not detrimental to the character of the property or its setting

The scheme has an inset at first floor level so that it does not come within 2m of the boundary above ground floor level, however this has minimal overall effect as the overall mass of the proposed extension reaching from the boundary line to the north to close to the boundary and the gable wall of number 19 to the south. It meets the 60-degree splay requirement for impact on the neighbouring properties but would create a cramped development in appearance.
19. The deep extension would also reduce the gap between the houses when seen from the street because the site tapers. The Design Principles state: *the space between buildings is an important feature of the whole Garden City and shall be maintained*. Although partly screened by vegetation the deep two storey rear extension is detrimental to the appearance of the house and the street scene.
20. The proposed two storey side extension runs along the boundary to the north. As the existing garage lies on the boundary and there is a large gap to number 15 to the north over an unused right of way, the principle of building up to the boundary has been accepted. However, the proposed scheme is very large, consisting of the two-storey flank wall to the proposed front upwards extension over the garage, a gable wall extended from the proposed hip-to-gable roof extension on the main house and the two-storey flank wall to the wrap around side to rear extension extending approximately 7m beyond the rear wall of the original house. In all the two-storey flank wall is over 22m long.
21. The appellant refers to the large hedge screening the plot to the north. This hedge is not in the control of the appellant and if removed would make this extensive flank wall very prominent in the street scene when viewed from the north.

22. The length of the side extension is disproportionate to the existing house. The Design Principles state
Side extensions shall be consistent with the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and matching materials, respecting the proportions and scale of the existing property
and
The area and volume of the proposed extension shall be subservient to and in proportion with the existing house and plot
The proposed wrap-around side to rear extension is not in proportion to the existing house, potentially detrimental to the street scene and therefore not in accordance with the Design Principles.
23. The appellant drew my attention to the variety of architectural styles and plot development on Pasture Road and as noted at the previous visit, the proposed changes to the materials and windows would not necessarily be out of place in the street scene if the finishes chosen are sympathetic. However, the change of pitch to the garage roof to achieve the two-storey height extension, the impact of the hip-to-gable extension on the bulk of the house and the closing of the gap between the appeal plot and number 29 adjacent would be detrimental to the appearance of the house and to the character and appearance of the area.
24. I was also provided with a block plan showing a similar large extension to 23 Pasture Road. I do not have detailed information from the Heritage Foundation about this dwelling but subsequent to my visit I have been told that special circumstances applied to this approval. I note that the extended house is inset from the boundaries and retains the garage as linked block. The extended 23 Pasture Road appears to be proportionate to its plot.

Conclusions

25. Having read the submissions and seen the site and its context again, I conclude that the proposed extensions and alterations are not in accordance with the Design Principles in respect of the hip-to-gable extensions to the main house roof, alterations to the roof pitch over the garage, the excessive width, depth and bulk of the rear extension and wrap around side extension. The negative impact of these on the street scene and on the character of the house are not in accordance with the Design Principles for Modern Character Areas. The appeal is dismissed.

Ruth Reed

Independent Scheme of Management Inspector