

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2016

by **D Cramond** BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 18 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/16/3154324
336 Watford Road, St Albans, AL2 3DR

- 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 L Boys against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref 5/16/0903, dated 21 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is a single storey front and side extension, extension to roof with side and front dormer windows and alterations.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality and upon living conditions for neighbours.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a modest single storey semi-detached dwelling. It is adjoined to a bungalow with substantial dormers and set back from a main road with a nearby range of dwelling types and sizes which, along with landscape, come together to form an established area principally residential in character and with a generally pleasing appearance. The proposal is as described above and would principally allow for living space re-arrangement with bedroom accommodation moving upstairs to 3 new rooms.
 4. Dormer windows are a local characteristic. Bearing in mind the parallel situation on the front elevation of the adjoining property, the substantial set-back from the road, the significant frontage street tree and the simple nature of the design I would concur with the Council that the front dormer element, large as it would be, would be acceptable in the immediate and wider context. However, in my opinion the rear side facing box dormer, or perhaps more accurately first floor rear flat roof element, is simply too excessive. It would visually swamp the original home and give the impression from a number of viewpoints of a poorly designed flat roofed dwelling. I noted that the neighbouring rear upper levels works are substantial. They are not of particular architectural merit but one accepts they are in place and they set the scene. However the appeal scheme would project rearward markedly beyond even these. The scheme would lack any architectural finesse and merely
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create an over-sized box-like structure out of keeping with the original property and the wider locality. The development would represent poor design and be jarring on the eye.

5. Saved Policies 69 and 72 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 (LP), taken together call for, amongst other matters, development to have an adequately high standard of design and extensions to be of a suitable scale and have compatibility with the original building. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with these development plan policies.

Living conditions

6. The Council is also concerned about side-ward overlooking from the rear dormer. A secondary bedroom would have a window facing this way. However I would agree with the Appellant on this matter – a planning condition could reasonably be applied to restrict transparency and opening lights on this window. Furthermore the relationship to the neighbouring property's siting is such that the window would not in any event look down to the 'patio' part of the rear garden but rather would have longer and oblique views towards its end. Additionally the reality is the degree of mutual overlooking is considerable as things stand as a result of a raised patio on the appeal site and low level fencing. I conclude the scheme would not impinge upon living standards for neighbours and would not conflict with the relevant part of LP Saved Policy 72 in this regard.

Other matters

7. I sympathise with the Appellant's wish to increase and improve the accommodation of this property. I recognise that amended plans have been submitted as part of the process with the Council to seek to achieve its support and pre-application dialogue was initially thought to be constructive. I appreciate that matching materials would be used. The dwelling is in an accessible location and there is understandably no objection to the single storey front alterations and extensions which would primarily provide a porch and would change garaging to storage. The existing flat roof extension to the rear has no aesthetic merit and it is clear that most of the design cues for the appeal scheme have been taken from the extended property alongside even though, as I indicate above, I consider the proposed scheme is over-extensive. I have carefully considered all the points raised by the Appellant but these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in relation to the main issue identified above.
8. I confirm that policies in the National Planning Policy Framework have been considered; the Council's policies which I cite mirror relevant objectives within that document.

Overall conclusion

9. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal proposal would not have undue adverse effects on living conditions for neighbours. However there would be unacceptable adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the host property and the locality. Accordingly the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond
INSPECTOR