

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2017

by Clive Tokley MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/16/3161973
50 Kingshill Avenue, St. Albans, AL4 9QB.

- 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 S. Messer against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref 5/16/1856 dated 12 June 2016 was refused by notice dated 5 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is single storey front and rear extension and first floor front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The appellant points out that the single-storey element of the front extension and the single-storey rear extension were the subject of a subsequent planning permission (ref 5/2016/2482). I have noted the objections raised to those parts of the proposal by nearby residents but taking account of what I saw at my site visit I have no reason to disagree with the Council's view that these are acceptable. In the light of the later permission I have confined my consideration of the proposal to the first floor front extension.
3. The main issue for this appeal is the effect of the first floor front extension on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Kingshill Avenue is a wide residential street within an extensive residential area. A few street trees grow in the road-side verge and some house have trees and mature shrubs in their front gardens; however the Kingshill Avenue has an open character with the fronts of the houses being clearly in view along the street. When visiting the site I noted that nearby streets had similar characteristics.
 5. The majority of the houses in Kingshill Avenue (including the appeal property) are semi-detached. The dwellings are of different sizes but they have been built with a consistent hipped roof design with distinctive flared eaves. I noted a small number of hip to gable conversions and side-facing dormers and the appellant draws my attention to the front extension at No 43 (opposite the appeal property). This is of a similar design but narrower than that proposed at
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the appeal property. Nevertheless my impression was that nearly all of the houses in Kingshill Avenue, and those of a similar design in the neighbouring streets, have retained their original form at first floor and roof level. The consistency of the roof design maintains the regularity and symmetry of the pairs of semi-detached houses and when applied to the street as a whole makes an important contribution to the distinctive character of the area.

6. The shallow pitch of the roof of the appeal dwelling, which is further reduced by the flared eaves, would result in the forward projection being a prominent addition. I consider that as a result of the width of the extension and the deeply overhanging eaves the proposal would be a dominant feature at the front of the house. The proposal would unbalance the appearance of the pair of dwellings in a manner that is uncharacteristic of the street. When seen along the street it would disrupt the rhythm of the roofscape which is one of the defining characteristics of this area.
7. When seen in elevation the proposed first floor front extension is well-proportioned with its windows and roof details matching those of the existing house, including the hipped roof with flared eaves and a deep overhang. In isolation the design and detailing of the extension would reflect the character of the original dwelling. However the achievement of good design goes beyond the relationship between an extension and its host. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) indicates that planning decisions should ensure that new built development should respond to local character and reflect the identity of local surroundings. It cautions against seeking to impose architectural styles or particular tastes; however it indicates that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.
8. The Council and the appellant refer to a 2009 application for a hip to gable conversion at the appeal property with a first-floor front extension. This was refused by the Council and was the subject of a dismissed appeal (ref APP/B1930/D/10/2126493). As regards its size and design that proposal had little in common with the current proposal. In dismissing the appeal the Inspector referred to the important contribution made by the hipped roofs to the rhythm of development along Kingshill Avenue. Unlike the 2009 proposal the extension now proposed would not result in the loss of the hipped form of the original roof; however I consider that the front extension now proposed would unacceptably disrupt the rhythm of the roofscape.
9. This residential area has no special designation; however the consistent roofscape of the dwellings makes a positive contribution to its character. I have noted the extension at No 43 and the small number of other variations in the roofscape, including the three detached houses at the junctions; however these represent a small proportion of the houses in the street. I consider that the proposal would unbalance the pair of dwellings and, through its disruption of the roofscape, it would fail to respect the distinctive rhythm of the buildings in the street.
10. The proposal would unacceptably detract from the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with saved policies 69 and 72 of the *St Albans District Local Plan Review* (1994). It would also conflict with the Framework which indicates that high quality design should always be sought and that it is proper to seek to reinforce local distinctiveness.

Conclusion

11. Taking account of all matters I have concluded that the proposal would unacceptably detract from the character and appearance of the area and that the appeal should not succeed.

Clive Tokley

INSPECTOR