

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2017

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 7 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/16/3164193

11 Highfield Avenue, Harpenden AL5 5UB

- 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 & Mrs J Finch against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/16/2647, dated 24 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 18 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is raising of roof to provide loft accommodation with 2 rear facing dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and street scene.

Reasons

3. Highfield Avenue is a residential road of predominantly semi-detached two storey dwellings. The appeal property is one of a small number of detached two-storey dwellings within this part of the road.
 4. Several properties, including those immediately neighbouring No 11, have had a similar form of roof conversion to the current proposal. These have resulted in a taller roof and a change from a full hip to a half hip. Consequently, the changes sought would not be uncharacteristic within this part of Highfield Avenue.
 5. The extensions that have already occurred in this part of the road are, however, to the full roof area covering two conjoined semi-detached dwellings. As a result, the increase in the height, bulk and mass of the altered roof are seen in relation to the width of two dwellings. In contrast, the same change to the detached dwelling proposed here would result in a roof that would appear disproportionately tall relative to the building's width, giving it a 'top heavy' appearance.
 6. The extended roof would appear incongruous particularly due to the unfavourable visual contrast with the more proportionate neighbouring
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dwellings. These include the extended semi-detached dwellings and the nearest detached dwelling, No 5, which has largely retained its original hipped roof despite some minor alterations. I accept that the half-hip element of the extended roof would be set further back than those of neighbouring extended properties and, unlike some of these, it would not include rooflights to the front. However, these existing extensions are in the form of simple pitched roofs with front-facing gables. The proposal involves changes to a more complex roof which, in its larger extended form, would accentuate the contrast with the simpler extended roofs. While the visual effects of these changes will not be seen from views further along Highfield Avenue, the property is readily seen from the public realm and from dwellings opposite.

7. The dormers proposed to the rear extended roof slope would not be uncharacteristic due to the dormer windows on neighbouring properties. However, their height and vertical alignment would accentuate the height of the extended roof with similar effect as at the front, in terms of a disproportionate and top heavy appearance. These harmful effects would not be readily seen from the rear of properties opposite due to the degree of separation. They would, however, be apparent from neighbours' gardens.
8. While I acknowledge that there were no objections to the proposal, I have taken account of the long-term effects with regard to the character and appearance of the street scene, including views from the public realm, nearby dwellings and their gardens. I accept that there are various roof forms in a wider context, including along Highfield and Fairmead Avenues. The street scene, however, is formed by the part of the road in which the appeal property is located, including its visual relationship with the closest neighbouring properties. This forms the proper basis for assessing the proposal, which I have considered on its individual merits. Accordingly, I give these other examples limited weight.
9. Therefore, for all the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and street scene. As such, it is contrary to Policies 69(i) and 72(i) and (ii) of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994, which concern the context for development and the scale, character and compatibility of residential extensions. Despite the age of the plan, these policies are broadly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly section seven concerning good design.
10. I acknowledge that the proposed extension is intended to create additional living space. However, these personal circumstances do not overcome the harm and conflict with development plan policies that I have found would result from the proposal.
11. Therefore, for the reasons given I conclude that that the appeal should not succeed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR