

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 March 2017

by P Eggleton BSc(Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20th March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3166473

47 Normandy Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 5PR

- 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 G Bell against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/16/2946, dated 27 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 24 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is a new basement with front light well with side and rear basement and ground floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a new basement with front light well with side and rear basement and ground floor extension at 47 Normandy Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 5PR in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/16/2946, dated 27 September 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: P0908/22/A, P090822 and P0908/23.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

3. The property lies within the extensive St Albans Conservation Area. This particular part of it is characterised by the linear form of the semi-detached and terraced period properties. These are generally set back from the road beyond a small front garden. They have a simple form with a narrow floor plan but distinctive and relatively uniform high quality detailing to the windows and doors, including the front bay windows. This property has been identified as a locally listed building along with a large number of other terraced and semi-detached period properties in the area that share the same design characteristics and floor plan, which includes a two storey rear projection.
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4. This proposal would retain the original form of the dwelling but would add a ground floor addition that would wrap around the existing two storey rear element. In addition, a lower ground floor would be dug underneath and would link into a new basement under the main part of the property. The Council are concerned that this extension would be a dominant addition that would detract from and undermine the distinctive 'L shaped' form of the original dwelling.
5. Although the proposal would alter the footprint of the dwelling, its form would remain clearly evident as the new works would be set below the height of the original rear element. In this respect, the proposal would remain subservient and subordinate to the form of the dwelling. The lower ground floor works would have very limited prominence as the land already drops steeply away from the raised terrace.
6. The L shape of the original footprint of this dwelling is a defining characteristic of its design and that of the numerous other locally listed properties in the area. Whilst I agree that it is important to retain this, the proposal would ensure that it remained clearly legible. Overall, the works would be sensitive to the form and original layout of the property and would represent a good quality design solution in this context. The backs of these houses are not generally visible from within the public domain and it is only the upper levels that are prominent in views from the surrounding properties. I am satisfied that the important characteristics of the original property would be retained and that the proposal would have a neutral impact on the wider character and appearance of the conservation area.
7. As the works would relate well to the existing scale of the dwelling and would represent a high standard of design in this context, the proposal would satisfy the design requirements of Policies 69 and 72 of the City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994. As it would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and retain the distinctive characteristics of this locally listed building, it would also satisfy Policies 85 and 87. These policies generally accord with the design and heritage requirements of the *National Planning Policy Framework* and can be afforded considerable weight.
8. The *Framework* is clear that any harm to a heritage asset, such as a conservation area, should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Similarly, any harm to a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account, having regard to the harm or loss to its significance. I have not found that there would be harm to the conservation area or harm to the significance of the locally listed building. The proposal would not therefore conflict with the heritage requirements of the *Framework*.
9. Reference has been made to the Council's design guide. I am not clear as to the status of this document but in any event, I have not found that the proposal would conflict with its design aspirations. The Council have also referred to the cumulative impact of this proposal and an extant permission for a dormer window. I only have the details of this proposal before me but in any event, I am not satisfied that the existence of a permission for an alternative loft conversion, would alter my assessment of this development.

10. No concerns have been raised by neighbouring residents but I have considered all the matters put forward by the Council. These matters do not weigh significantly against the proposal. I therefore allow the appeal.
11. I have imposed conditions relating to the commencement of development and the details of the approved plans in the interests of proper planning and certainty. As the plans are clear that the materials would match, I have not found that other conditions would be necessary.

Peter Eggleton

INSPECTOR