

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 March 2017

by Y Wright BSc (Hons) DipTP MSc DMS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3169476

71 Wynches Farm Drive, St Albans AL4 0XH

- 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 Mike Viney against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/16/3324, dated 7 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 9 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is raised replacement roof with rooms in the roof space with dormer windows to rear and velux windows to the front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for raised replacement roof with rooms in the roof space with dormer windows to rear and velux windows to the front at 71 Wynches Farm Drive, St Albans AL4 0XH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/16/3324, dated 7 November 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: site and block plans, MMMV/WFD/1 REV A and MMMV/WFD/2 REV C.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural Matter

2. As the Council's evidence gave conflicting advice as to whether the appeal site was or was not in the Green Belt I requested clarification from the Council on this matter. The Council has confirmed that only a small strip of the appeal site located to the west of the dwelling is within the Green Belt. The development itself therefore would not be in the Green Belt. I determine the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the property and surrounding area.
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Reasons

4. The appeal property is a two storey detached dwelling located on a relatively modern residential housing estate. Surrounding properties to the east and north are mainly detached and are of a similar finish and scale to the appeal dwelling, though of varying designs. A block of flats lies to the south opposite the appeal site. Garden areas appear modest in size and the majority of dwellings are quite close together. This results in development which has a fairly tight-knit character.
5. The appeal dwelling fronts onto Wynches Farm Drive, with its gardens extending to the east and west. Its rear elevation is adjacent to the site's northern boundary and within very close proximity to the side elevation of the neighbouring two storey property at No 72. The other neighbouring property along Wynches Farm Drive (No 70) is separated from the appeal property by its side garden.
6. Policy 69 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review (1994) (LP) seeks development of an adequately high standard of design taking account of matters including context, materials and other relevant LP policies. LP Policy 72 advocates that extensions to buildings in residential areas conform to the prescribed list of criteria. This includes seeking development that relates to the domestic scale, character and appearance of the street.
7. In considering this appeal I am also mindful that the Framework places great importance on development being of good design and responding to local character to ensure the integration of new development into the existing environment.
8. The proposal would result in only a modest increase in the height of the roof of the appeal dwelling. Whilst the box dormer window to the rear would extend across most of the dwelling's rear roof, it would be set in from the edges and set down from the ridgeline. In addition there would only be limited views of this from within the street scene and from neighbouring properties due to its position to the rear of the property and its close proximity to the side elevation and roof of No 72. The view of the eastern side elevation of the dormer would therefore be seen within the context of this existing roofscape and would not appear excessive in scale or size.
9. Furthermore I saw on my site visit that there are a number of loft conversions with rear dormer windows and front facing velux windows on other properties within the locality including houses on Wynches Farm Drive. As such this form of development does not appear to be uncommon in the locality. Notwithstanding this I have considered the appeal on its own individual merits. I particularly note in this regard the specific siting of the appeal dwelling in relation to its surroundings, particularly the unusually close proximity and orientation to No 72.
10. Consequently taking all the above factors into account I consider the development would not be overly prominent within the street scene and would not unduly detract from the character and appearance of either the appeal dwelling or the residential estate. I therefore conclude that the development would not result in material harm to the character and appearance of the property or the surrounding area. As such it would be in accordance with LP Policies 69 and 72 and the Framework.

11. The Council suggests that the grant of planning permission for this proposal would set an undesirable precedent as it would be likely to lead to further applications for similar roof extensions within the locality which would compromise the character of the area. However, as stated above, my findings in this appeal must be based only on the planning merits of the case that is before me. The circumstances of other sites are likely to be different and if proposals came forward elsewhere within the locality they would be assessed in the light of the factors relevant to that case. Therefore I consider the concern about precedent does not offer a basis for resisting the scheme.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Y Wright

INSPECTOR