
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 April 2017

by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3170489
49 Sherwood Avenue, St Albans AL4 9QJ

- 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 Waxhousegate Estates Ltd against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/16/3133, dated 17 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 9 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is a part single, part two storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have taken the description of development as it appears on the appeal form. Whilst this differs from that on the planning application form, it most accurately describes the development to which the appeal relates. It is clear that the Council are content with this approach since the same description appears on their decision notice. I have proceeded on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the building and the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal building is one of a pair of relatively modern semidetached two storey dwellings set back from and facing the road. They are on a slightly raised land level to Sherwood Avenue and finished in brick, with a tiled gable roof and painted render panel detailing. Access and vehicular parking is provided to the front. Both of the dwellings have been extended over two storeys to the side, thus maintaining their deigned symmetry. The appeal building's extension comprises a garage with room over.
 5. The proposed development would extend the dwelling again to the side, over two storeys. It would not continue at the exiting ridge height but it would not appear subservient given it would be based on a slightly lower ground level and it would be of substantial width relative to the existing dwelling. The resulting undue prominence of the extension would be exacerbated by the dwelling's exposed street corner location. The additional width and frontage detailing
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would also unbalance the symmetrical design which is a feature of the pair of dwellings. The garage would become enclosed on both sides which would garner an unconventional frontage and further the uncharacteristic appearance of the resulting dwelling.

6. The single storey extension to the rear of the dwelling would cause limited harm in isolation by virtue of its location and height. It would nevertheless represent additional bulk and mass and thus add to the harm that I have identified.
7. When taking all of these matters together, I would conclude that the proposed development would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area and conflict with saved Policies 69 and 72 of the Local Plan¹. These Policies, amongst other things and along with section 7 of the Framework² seek to ensure that new development, and extensions to dwellings in particular, are of a high quality and contextually appropriate design and appearance.

Other Matters

8. My attention is drawn to a number of other examples of two storey side extensions in the area. I accept that these are varied in their size and design. Nonetheless, each development proposal is considered on its own merits and as such the examples given are not sufficient to justify the scheme before me.
9. The use of appropriate materials and external finishes in the proposed development would assist in some visual harmony with the existing dwelling. There would be no harm to access, parking or the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. In addition, I note the overall size of the plot and the resulting garden, the distance between the proposed development and the plot boundaries as well as its floor area compared to the existing dwelling.
10. Matching materials would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm that the design, scale and siting of the proposed development would cause. Similarly, the lack of harm in some respects is neutral in the balance and as such cannot be use to outweigh harm in others.
11. There is a substantial hedge along the shared front garden boundary with Number 47 Sherwood Avenue. This would offer some visual screening for the proposed development but would not obscure it entirely. In any event, I am not persuaded by the argument that hiding unacceptable development would make it acceptable.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR

¹ St Albans District Plan: City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994

² The National Planning Policy Framework