The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 June 2017

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3173137
32 Verulam Road, St Albans, AL3 4DE

- 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 Steve Lambert against the decision of St Albans City Council.
- The application Ref 5/16/3874, dated 28 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2017.
- The development proposed is the construction of a first-floor rear extension, alterations to openings, the insertion of a rooflight to the rear, and the reinstatement of a chimney.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the construction of a first-floor rear extension, alterations to openings, the insertion of a rooflight to the rear, and the reinstatement of a chimney at 32 Verulam Road, St Albans, AL3 4DE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/16/3874, dated 28 December 2016, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:

    1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

    2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Job No:152 – Drawing Nos PO1 (Rev B), PO2 (Rev A), PO3, PO4 (Rev A), PO5 (Rev A) and PO6 (Rev A)

    3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is whether the proposals would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. No 32 Verulam Road is a detached house, set back from the road behind the main row of houses that front the street. The land slopes up from the street to the east, such that the appeal property has a basement at the front, but the rear of the house is set into the slope, with much of the rear garden around 1 metre above the ground floor level. It is a two-storey house with a pitched roof and gable ends. There is a shallow, single-storey rear extension across almost the whole of the width of the house. The house is locally listed.

4. The proposed development would include the construction of a first-floor above the existing single-storey rear extension. There are other minor developments also included, but the Council has indicated that these do not raise any significant issues, and I concur with that view. The main consideration, therefore, relates to the rear extension. The depth of the existing rear extension is only some 1.5 metres and the proposed first floor would continue the existing rear elevation upwards. The roof slope would be continued downwards to meet the new rear elevation and the overall roof pitch would be unaltered. The eaves level at the rear would be reduced and the rear roof slope would be slightly longer than that at the front.

5. The Council contends that the excessive width, alteration to the roof pitch to create an asymmetric roof form to the existing dual-pitched roof form, different eaves level and chamfered edge to the proposed extension would fail to create a subordinate addition that leaves the original locally listed building predominant, and would fail to achieve an adequately high standard of design.

6. However, there is a range of roof styles and designs in the vicinity, and the character of this part of the CA would appear to be established largely by the layout of the streets and buildings, along with the range of types of buildings in the area, including the residential properties surrounding the adjacent large church. I do not consider that the symmetry of the existing roof at the appeal property is a significant feature in establishing or maintaining the character and appearance of this part of the St Albans Conservation Area (CA) or in the local street scene, particularly since this aspect of the roof is not visible from Verulam Road, and it is only partly visible from very limited positions on Spencer Street and Upper Dagnall Street. In addition, there is already a degree of asymmetry within the original house, both in terms of the front elevation, and the overall design resulting from the effect of the topography of the site.

7. The proposed extension would continue not only the line of the existing rear elevation but also the chamfered corner at the northern end. It would match the existing single-storey extension in terms of materials and design. It would be only an insignificant feature in the street scene from any relevant angle, since it would be largely obscured by buildings on and around the street frontages, and/or boundary walls and fences. Moreover, by virtue of its limited depth and height to eaves, the original structure would remain the predominant feature of the property.

8. In conclusion, the proposed extension would not be harmful to the CA, and may therefore be said to preserve its character and appearance. By virtue of its limited size, it would not dominate the original house, and by virtue of its matching materials and overall design, it would reflect the character of the host property and the surrounding area. It would not, therefore, conflict with Policies 69 and 72 of the Council's District Local Plan Review (LP), which require development, including extensions, to reflect the scale, character and materials of the surroundings. Similarly, it would not conflict with Policy 85 of the LP which requires that extensions should be designed to leave the original building form predominant and to extend or repeat the form of the original roof. Finally, it would not conflict with Policy 87 of the LP, which indicates that alterations and extensions to buildings in conservation areas should preserve features of architectural or historic interest and Policy 85 should be complied with.

Conditions

9. I have attached a condition relating to plans because it is necessary that the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. I have attached a further condition relating to materials in the interests of the visual amenities of the area.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR