

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 August 2017

by P G Horridge BSc(Hons) DipTP FRICS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3177317

1 East Mount, Wheathampstead AL4 8BJ

- 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 Mark Seymour against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/17/0186 was refused by notice dated 13 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side extension and detached garage/workshop located to rear garden.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. At issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. 1 East Mount is the end property in a small terrace of 4 dwellings located in the village of Wheathampstead. It has already been extended at the side and rear by a part-single, part-two storey extension. The proposal is to enlarge the side extension to create a two-storey wing with accommodation on the first floor and a car port below allowing access through to the rear garden where a single storey garage/workshop building would also be constructed. At the time of the site inspection, a slab for the latter had already been laid.
 4. Relevant planning policies are contained in the City & District of St Albans District Local Plan Review (LP) adopted in 1994. Policy 69 requires development to have a high standard of design, taking account of, among other matters, the scale and character of the surroundings. More specifically in respect of house extensions, Policy 72 requires them to relate to the scale, character and appearance of the street and be compatible with the original building. Policy 74 dealing with landscaping seeks to retain existing important landscape features and requires a tree survey on sites with significant existing landscaping.
 5. Although now of some age, these policies are nevertheless consistent with section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that poor design and developments that fail to respond to local character, and have an adverse effect on the local environment, should be refused.
-

6. There is an existing tree in the rear garden of the property and further trees just beyond the site boundary close to the proposed new garage/workshop. The absence of a tree survey to assess the impact of the building on these trees, and potential mitigation measures, was one of the reasons for refusal. No such survey is included with the appeal documents. In the Grounds of Appeal the appellant argues that the building would have a raft foundation designed by a structural engineer so that minimal ground excavation works would be carried out. However, no details have been provided. The slab has already been laid and appears to have had some effect on existing tree roots. The trees do contribute to the appearance of the area and, in the absence of specific evidence as to the impact on them, the works could have a detrimental effect on this appearance contrary to LP Policy 74.
7. Partly because of the need to allow vehicular access to the garage/workshop at the rear, the proposed extension would be of significant width. It would be set well back from the front wall of the house and its ridge line would be below that of the original roof, giving it a measure of subservience. In addition the materials and detailing, such as brick arches above the sash windows in the front elevation, would harmonise with those of the original house. However, the excessive width of the extension would be a prominent feature and would demonstrably unbalance the architectural integrity of the terrace of 4 houses. At the rear, moreover, the increased height of the rear gable would harm the regular rhythm of the existing 4 rear gables of the houses. Public views of the rear elevation are at present largely screened by trees but such concealment may be lost dependent on the consequences for these trees of the construction of the garage/workshop as noted above. Overall, the extension would be of a scale and appearance that would not harmonise with the house and the terrace of which it forms part and would harm the appearance of the area, contrary to LP Policies 69 and 72.

Peter Horridge

INSPECTOR