

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/17/3175551

61 Grange Street, St Albans AL3 5LZ

- 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 Kern Roderick-Jones against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/17/0056 was refused by notice dated 7 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is demolition of rear two-storey extension and replace with new two-storey extension to flank and rear elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. At issue are the effects of the proposal, firstly on the character and appearance of the area, having regard to its location within the St Albans Conservation Area, and secondly on the living conditions of residents of 63A Grange Street, with particular reference to loss of light and outlook.

Reasons

3. The council refused planning permission solely on the grounds of the effect of the proposal on 63A Grange Street, the Planning Committee declining to support the officers' recommended second reason for refusal that the extension would be an unsympathetic and visually obtrusive addition to the original dwelling, street scene and Conservation Area. Nevertheless, I am obliged to consider this issue by virtue of section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which provides that, in making decisions on planning applications in conservation areas, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area concerned.
 4. The St Albans Conservation Area embraces a wide area focussed on the cathedral and historic centre of the city, and deriving its character from its history and the range of building styles. The draft Conservation Area Character Statement notes that it contains a number of areas of specific character each with its own defined identity. Grange Street lies on the edge of the Conservation Area, within the 'Folly Lane, Garden Fields and Old Hospital' character area, whose guide identifies the appeal building and others in the street as 'locally listed buildings' of importance to its character.
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5. Relevant planning policies are contained in the City & District of St Albans District Local Plan Review (LP) adopted in 1994. Policy 72 requires house extensions to relate to the scale, character and appearance of the street and be compatible with the original building, and to protect the amenities of residents of neighbouring properties.
6. Although now of some age, this policy is nevertheless consistent with paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which states that planning should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings, and also with section 7 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.
7. Number 61 Grange Street is a two-storey detached Victorian villa located towards the end of the street. To the north-west is a modern two-storey house, 63A Grange Street, situated at a much lower level.
8. The proposal is to build a side extension that would also wrap around the rear of the property, replacing an existing part-single, part-two storey extension. The front elevation of the extension would replicate and mirror existing features in this elevation such as the bay window and first floor sash windows with brick arches. To the rear, however, the proposal would be less successful, with a large shallow-pitched gable occupying the entire width of the extended property and the ground floor elevation occupied almost entirely by a wide bi-fold door. These elements would be unsympathetic to the Victorian origins of this 'locally listed' property and would detract from its appearance, thereby failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
9. To the north-west, 63A Grange Street is at present partly screened from the appeal site by trees and foliage along the common boundary. These already have some shadowing effect on this property particularly when in leaf. The appellant notes that one conifer tree has previously been removed, with the appropriate consent, thus improving the light reaching 63A. It is evident that some of the remaining vegetation would have to be removed to facilitate the parking arrangements shown on the application plan¹.
10. The proposed extension would bring built development much closer to the front elevation of 63A. Although the main outlook from this property is over its rear garden and the closest windows to 61 would appear to light some secondary rooms, there would nevertheless be a reduction in the outlook from 61 and a diminution in the light reaching this property, particularly given the change in levels which results in the first floor of 63A being at approximately the same level as the ground floor of 61. Moreover, while there are already a number of windows in the side elevation of 61 facing towards 63A, the new extension would have windows in closer proximity to 63A which, with the likely loss of vegetation along the common boundary, could have adverse effects for the level of privacy presently enjoyed by residents of 63A.
11. Overall, the proposal fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, and would adversely affect the living

¹ The appellant suggests that the walnut tree in this location could be retained, although it would appear to be affected by the indicated parking arrangements and possibly by the extension itself

conditions of residents of 63A, contrary to LP Policy 72. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Peter Horridge

INSPECTOR