

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 September 2017

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 2nd October 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3179388

35 Vale Close, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 3LX

- 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 Matt Warren against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref 5/17/0375, dated 8 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is a first floor front, side and rear extension and changes to rear roofline.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a modest chalet-bungalow semi-detached dwelling with a linked flat roofed garage to the side and lying within a short row of similar properties. The wider area and estate has a range of house types from the same era and the area is of established residential character and pleasing appearance. The proposal is as described above and would principally allow for continued garaging, increased ground floor living space and upstairs bedroom expansion.
 4. The principal, or at least most obvious, part of the works would be the addition of a first floor forward facing gable element. This would be on a line with the front of the existing garage and porch and hence closer to the street than the existing main front elevation and the dormer window arrangement. The pitched roof over this new gable would lie a little lower than the existing main ridge height but nevertheless the scheme would be a strident one with first floor flank walls being prominent along with the gable up to the pitch and the roof itself. The junction of the original and the new build would look awkward with the flat roofed dormer, existing and proposed pitched roofs, varied eaves' heights and walling coming together with a lack of architectural co-ordination meaning that the new development would be a visually odd change to this property in this context.
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5. The scheme would lack any architectural finesse or subtlety and would create a projecting and 'ill-fitting' structure out of keeping with the original dwelling and this row of properties. In my opinion the development would represent poor design.
6. Saved Policies 69 and 72 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 (LP), taken together call for, amongst other matters, development to have an adequately high standard of design and extensions to be of a suitable scale and have compatibility with the original building. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with these development plan policies.

Other matters

7. I sympathise with the Appellant's wish to increase and improve the accommodation of this property. I hope that in due course a suitable way can be found for providing this as I would not rule out change at this property notwithstanding present consistency or repetitive character. Any future scheme would be judged on its own qualities. I agree that variety can often make a positive contribution to a streetscene. However I would say that any such diversity of style should not be overly aggressive where harmony presently prevails or the result would be jarring on the eye; and that is my concern in this instance. I have considered and viewed other examples on the estate of front extensions drawn to my attention but I do not find them to be directly comparable in terms of form, scale, location or context and they do not set a precedent. In any event I must determine this case on its own merits. I have carefully considered all the points raised by the Appellant but these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in relation to the main issue identified above.
8. I confirm that policies in the National Planning Policy Framework have been considered; the Council's policies which I cite mirror relevant objectives within that document.

Overall conclusion

9. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the host property and the locality. Accordingly the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond

INSPECTOR