
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2017

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 6th October 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3180103

10 Admirals Walk, St Albans AL1 5SF

- 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 & Mrs R Eccles against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/17/0627, dated 3 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 18 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is two storey front extension and single storey, part two storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the two storey front extension. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the single storey, part two storey rear extension and planning permission is granted for the single storey, part two storey rear extension at 10 Admirals Walk, St Albans AL1 5SF in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/17/0627, dated 3 March 2017, and the plans submitted with it, so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted, and 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: 3930-OS1, 3930-OS2, 3930-E01 and 3930-P01 Rev B, except in respect of the two storey front extension.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the single storey, part two storey rear extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural Matter

2. For the reasons that follow, I find the proposed single storey, part two storey rear extension to be acceptable and it is clearly severable both physically and functionally from the proposed two storey front extension. Therefore, I intend to issue a split decision in this case and grant planning permission for the single storey, part two storey rear extension.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal property is situated within a row of six linked detached properties on Admirals Walk between Blake Close and St Vincent Drive. These properties have architectural consistency in terms of two storey gabled front elevations that are prominent in views along the road where the building line is staggered. Four of the six properties have two storey side projections or extensions, including the appeal property. The scale and design of each projection varies, with a mixture of hipped, crown and gable roofs. The latter is used at the appeal property. Notwithstanding this variety, in each case the projections are clearly set back from the front gable and form a single projection from the side. Therefore, they do not affect the prominence or balance of the front gable or appear overly dominant.
5. The proposed two storey front extension would utilise a hipped and crown roof form found on other properties in this row, with a pitch and eaves line to match the existing front and side gables. It would be subservient in terms of its ridgeline and would be set in from the side boundary. However, there would be minimal set back from the front gable and it would largely infill the space between the front and side gables. It would also introduce a second projection from the side of the property with a roof form that would sit awkwardly alongside the existing gables. The prominence and balance of the front gable elevation would be eroded and the extension would form an incongruous feature on both the original dwelling and within the adjoining street scene.
6. The appeal property is not a listed or locally listed building, nor does it lie within a conservation area, but this does not justify poor design here. I recognise that permitted development rights exist to allow householders to extend and alter their properties up to certain limits, but it has not been demonstrated that the proposed front extension could be built under such rights. I note the appellant's statement that the planning system is not intended to seek perfection in design terms, but it does have a role in seeking good design.
7. The proposed single storey, part two storey rear extension would extend the gable on the rear elevation of the existing property, but maintain its proportions and prominence. The single storey elements would flank either side of the extended gable and would be subservient to it in terms of their scale and use of flat roofs. Therefore, it would be an appropriate addition to the property and would be clearly severable from the proposed front extension.
8. In conclusion, while the proposed single storey, part two storey rear extension would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the original dwelling and the surrounding area, the proposed two storey front extension would have a harmful effect. Thus, the proposed two storey front extension would not accord with Policies 69 and 72 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 which, amongst other things, require development to have an adequately high standard of design, taking into account the scale and character of its surroundings and the compatibility with the original building. Although these policies date back some 20 odd years, they remain broadly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and so their relevance and weight is not diminished. The NPPF seeks development that responds to local character and reflects local surroundings, which the proposed front extension would not meet.

Conditions

9. Conditions setting a time limit for the commencement of the single storey, part two storey rear extension and for it to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans are necessary for clarity and compliance. A condition requiring the external materials of this extension to match those used in the existing building is necessary to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed insofar as it relates to the single storey, part two storey rear extension and dismissed insofar as it relates to the two storey front extension.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR