
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October 2017

by Rory MacLeod BA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11th December 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/17/3181557
24 Amenbury Lane, Harpenden AL5 2DF

- 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 and Mrs R Hamilton against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/17/0608, dated 1 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 12 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is first floor side and front extension, two storey rear extension, single storey rear extension, replacement roof and front porch.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Planning permission has been granted previously for several elements of the proposal. The reason for refusal of the application relates solely to proposed changes to the roof of the dwelling, and so my deliberations relate to the planning merits of this part of the proposal.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed new roof on the character and appearance of the existing building and street scene and on the character and appearance of the Harpenden Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a large detached house on the north side of the road which is a locally listed building. It forms part of a row of detached houses of varying size and design along this side of the road with a tennis club opposite. All the houses on the northern side of Amenbury Road are located within the Harpenden Conservation Area.
5. The proposal includes the provision of a new roof to incorporate a second floor attic room with a small front dormer and larger rear dormer. The Council reports states that the existing 35 degree pitch roof would be replaced with a steeper pitch of 40 degrees, that the external walls would be raised by 300mm and that there would be an added height of 1.5m to the ridge. The submitted drawings compare the proposed roof to that of an unimplemented permission for various extensions including a roof over a first floor side extension. The

appeal proposal would by comparison present a simplified roof design with set backs relating to presently recessed walls removed. The front dormer would be of modest proportions and neatly aligned over a first floor window and the main entrance. The individual design elements would not be unattractive, but the mass and height of the new roof would be greatly increased.

6. The adjacent house to the west, 26 Amenbury Road, is on higher ground and set back substantially from the road such that its front wall aligns approximately with the rear wall of no.24. This siting means that the two houses are not viewed together from the road to the east of the appeal site but when viewed from the west the side wall of the house and mass of the new roof would be conspicuous. The adjacent house to the east, 22 Amenbury Road, is on lower ground and sited to align with the front wall of no.24. It is a smaller dwelling and the increased height and mass of the new roof would be apparent when the two houses are viewed together in the street scene.
7. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a statutory duty for decision takers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given the conservation of designated heritage assets.
8. No.24 Amenbury Road, as a locally listed building is an undesignated heritage asset located within the designated heritage asset of the conservation area. Paragraph 135 of the Framework states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application.
9. Whilst there is variation in the design of houses on the north side of Amenbury Road, there is a rhythm of buildings of similar scale with spaces between and the street has a cohesive and pleasant appearance. The setting of the buildings is enhanced by soft landscaping to the front gardens but this does not conceal their roofscapes. The proposed new roof would appear as a dominant and disruptive element in the appearance of the street scene by reason of its mass and height. As such, it would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Harpenden Conservation Area.
10. At present no.24 has a two storey bay window with roof over as the dominant design feature. Other parts of the roof are set back from and are subservient to this, supported on walls set behind the bay. The articulation of recessed walls that help to define the original form and profile of the house would be lost in the appeal proposals. The higher roof and flatter frontage enable a simpler roof form, but the significance of the form and profile of the existing building as a locally listed building would be undermined.
11. In these respects the proposal would conflict with policies 69 and 72 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 (LP) that encourage development to take account of the scale and character of its surroundings and for extensions to be compatible with the original building. Similarly there would be conflict with policy 85 of the LP that normally requires extensions in conservation areas to be designed to leave the original roof form predominant, and with policy 87 that encourages extensions to locally listed buildings to preserve architectural features.

12. These policies pre-date the Framework but are broadly compatible with its provisions in relation to design and to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The proposal would thereby also be in conflict with the Framework as a whole.
13. External materials have been selected to match the existing building. The Design and Access Statement indicates that the proposal would allow the creation of a much better living space and better circulation at first floor level. However, these benefits do not outweigh the harm that I have identified in relation to the effect of the development on a designated conservation area, an issue to which I have to accord substantial weight having regard to the statutory duty set out in paragraph 7 above. Neither would the benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm to the significance of the dwelling as a locally listed building. The planning history at the site confirms that there are alternative options to securing the optimum viable use of the property.

Conclusion

14. The new roof would detract from the character and appearance of the existing building and its significance as a locally listed building and it would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Harpenden Conservation Area. Therefore the appeal should be dismissed.

Rory MacLeod

INSPECTOR