
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 May 2020

by Matthew Woodward BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/20/3244885

13 Lattimore Road, St Albans AL1 3XL

- 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 Ms Kerry Anne Lawlor against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/19/2317, dated 11 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described by the appellant as 'Replacement of existing modern/ UPVC white sash windows with grey casement windows to improve visual appearance, internal daylight levels and thermal performance. This application covers the replacement of three windows on the primary elevation facing the public road. There is no impact on the brickwork/ masonry elements'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The development has already taken place. The submitted plans also reflect the development that has been carried out. I have assessed the appeal based on the development that now exists.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property lies in the St Albans Conservation Area (CA). I have been provided with a copy of the conservation area appraisal for the CA¹, and I have drawn on this, together with the evidence before me, to determine the significance of the CA. In this regard, the appeal property lies amidst a short row of terraced properties which have a traditional style. The wider street includes a mix of building styles along with examples of unsympathetic alterations to properties which fragment the otherwise traditional character of the street. Nevertheless, due to the appearance of the façade, materials, fenestration pattern and architectural detailing of the terrace within which the appeal property sits, it makes a significant contribution to the historic character and appearance of the CA. Its historic and architectural richness reinforces its value as a local asset.

¹ I have been provided with a copy of the 'Character Area 5a - London Road' of the St Albans Conservation Area

5. The style of the windows in situ differ from the sash style windows they replaced. Not only do the installed windows lack glazing bars within each pane of glass, but the horizontal rail dividing each pane is much bulkier than the corresponding meeting rail which is present in the sash windows in the adjacent lying properties. Moreover, the grey colour of the frames exacerbates their presence in comparison with the white window frames which prevail within the terrace. Consequently, the windows appear as features of modern design and style, at odds with the traditional style of the building, undermining the contribution the terrace makes to its surroundings.
6. I appreciate that there are other local examples of windows with a similar style and colour to those in the appeal property, and I could see on my site visit that the street was fronted by a variety of buildings styles and fenestration patterns. Be that as it may, the bulkier form and grey colour of the windows in the appeal property does not reflect the more traditional fenestration composition of the wider terrace. Therefore, I find that the windows are out of step with the traditional style of the terrace, undermining the important positive contribution it makes to the CA.
7. It is put to me by the appellant that grey windows were common features of architecture during the period in which the appeal building was erected, and I have been provided with several photographic examples of grey window frames in different buildings throughout the country. I do not dispute that similar window designs to those which relate to this appeal have been successfully integrated into other buildings, both old and new. However, a building's fenestration is an important component in defining its visual and architectural character and the windows in situ are modern insertions which are obtrusive in their historic setting. Nonetheless, I consider that the impact of the development is localised, thus the harm to the character and appearance of the CA is less than substantial in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework)².
8. I appreciate that the replacement window frames may be more thermally efficient thus reducing the appellant's carbon footprint. Moreover, I am told that the windows also improve the security of the property in comparison with their replacements and would not require painting. Furthermore, it is put to me that the windows are easier to use for disabled persons than the replaced sash windows. However, there is no evidence to suggest that alternative measures to deal with these matters have been explored by the appellant, and I am not persuaded that the replacement windows are the only means of achieving the stated objectives. Having regard to paragraph 196 of the Framework, I do not consider that these public benefits are sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm I have identified.
9. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and therefore any harm requires clear and convincing justification. In accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, which I have done in reaching my decision.
10. In conclusion, the development harms the character and appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area. It conflicts with Saved Policies 69, 85 and 87 of the City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 (Local Plan) which

² See paragraph 193 of the Framework

requires, amongst other matters, that development respects the scale and character of its surroundings and utilises materials that preserve the architectural and historic interest of the area. The development also conflicts with paragraphs 193 and 196 of the Framework as the public benefits do not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage asset.

11. The Council's decision notice also states there is conflict with Policy 72 of the Local Plan³. However, even if I was to accept the appellant's assertion that Policy 72 is not applicable in this case, as the proposal is not an extension to a property, I have found conflict with several other saved policies as detailed above, and conflict with the development plan as a whole. Therefore, notwithstanding whether or not the development is in conflict with Policy 72, it does not alter my overall conclusion, and the development is unacceptable for the reasons set out.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Matthew Woodward

INSPECTOR

³ Policy 72 – is entitled 'Extensions in Residential Areas'