



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 September 2020

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/20/3253733

3 Fryth Mead, St Albans AL3 4TN

- 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 D Voisey against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/20/0585, dated 5 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is raising and alterations to roof to accommodate loft conversion to habitable space with rear dormer windows and front rooflights, relocation of existing solar panels, insertion of sun tube and rooflights to single storey rear and alterations to openings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Council's second reason for refusing planning permission related to insufficient information having been submitted to allow the impact of the proposed development upon bats to be considered. However, the appeal submission is supported by an Ecology Report¹ that references survey work undertaken at the property and no evidence of bats being found. The Council has duly confirmed that it no longer wishes to defend its second reason for refusing planning permission and I shall consider the appeal on this basis.
3. I have noted reference within the evidence before me to the emerging St Albans City and District Council Local Plan 2020-2036 (the SACDCLP). Nevertheless, there is nothing before me to indicate that the SACDCLP is currently at a stage that should attract anything more than limited weight. I shall consider the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

4. Whether or not the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

5. It has come to my attention that planning permission² was granted by the Council on 18 August 2020 for development of a near identical description to

¹ Cherrifield Ecology, dated 28 May 2020

² 5/20/1365

that being considered under this appeal. Indeed, the scheme for which planning permission is in place involves the same schedule of works to that under consideration here, but for the omission of a part flat-roofed connecting element between rear facing dormer window openings.

6. I find no reason to suppose that the appellants would not seek to implement the August 2020 permission should this appeal be unsuccessful. It thus represents a very realistic fallback position and I shall consider the proposal's effect upon the character or appearance of the CA in this context. In other words, I shall primarily focus upon the effect of the proposed connecting element between the rear-facing dormers.
7. The significance of the CA as a designated heritage asset, is drawn, in part, from its rich history, its range of historic building styles and its abundance of open spaces. This significance is further defined by the existence of neatly designed and consistently set out residential areas and estates. The appeal property itself is comprised of a sizeable two-storey dwelling positioned at the end of a row of similarly designed properties. A variety of hipped and gabled roof forms are in place locally and roof slopes can typically be observed to be clear of dormer additions.
8. The proposed dormer additions and their connecting element would be discreetly sited in the sense they would be positioned to the appeal property's rear-facing roof slope and thus tucked away from Fryth Mead vantage points. However, the additions would still have a presence at roof height and offer the potential to influence how the appeal property's roof form would be read and experienced, most particularly by neighbouring residents.
9. There are already a pair of hipped-roof dormer window openings in place to the rear-facing roof slope of No 9 Fryth Mead (No 9), which is positioned within the same row of dwellings that contains the appeal property. These features, whilst not repeated elsewhere within the row, are of limited scale and are positioned and designed to respect No 9's original roof form, which remains dominant and readily appreciable.
10. The proposed dormer additions in themselves would be sensibly scaled and sensitively designed. However, even when factoring in its intended slightly recessed position, the connecting element would appear as a discordant and overly intricate addition. Indeed, it would fail to respect or appropriately respond to the simplicity of the appeal property's newly remodelled main roof design. This is even should the connecting element be constructed with the use of matching/sympathetic external-facing materials.
11. For the above reasons, the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm being caused to the significance of the CA. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) (the Framework), any less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Whilst improved/enlarged internal living arrangements would be provided, I am unaware of any notable public benefits that would result from the scheme to counter the identified harm.
12. The proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA in conflict with saved Policies 69, 72 and 85 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review (November 1994) and with the Framework in so far as these policies require extensions to dwellings in residential areas to be compatible

with the original building and that, with respect to extensions within conservation areas, the form of the original roof shall normally be extended or repeated.

Other Matters

13. I have noted objections/concerns raised by interested parties with respect to matters including the effect upon neighbouring living conditions. However, as I have found the proposal to be unacceptable for other reasons, it is not necessary for me to explore these matters further here.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR