



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 September 2020

by Gareth Wildgoose BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07/10/2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/20/3252120

44 Pageant Road, St Albans AL1 1NE

- 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 Mrs Rachel Hyndman against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/2019/2937, dated 20 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing single storey bathroom extension, proposed single storey rear extension, rear dormer extension and front rooflights to loft conversion. Replacement windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the locally listed building and whether it would preserve or enhance the character, appearance and significance of St Albans Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located on the northern side of Pageant Road within an established residential area and consists of a two-storey end-terraced dwelling of modest proportions set behind a shallow front yard with low boundary wall. The property is within the St Albans Conservation Area and it is a locally listed building. It forms part of a rhythm of dwellings within an area where groups of predominantly terraced rows and semi-detached properties are of a similar character located close to the street and typically with shallow rear gardens in broadly parallel street patterns. A coherence of local character, therefore, exists despite some variations in individual frontage finishes and fenestration.
4. St Albans Conservation Area covers an expansive area of the city and therefore, includes diverse sections with differing character. The Cathedral & Abbey Church of Saint Alban is the focal point to the west of Holywell Hill (A5183), whereas Pageant Road lies to the east behind the mostly commercial frontage buildings that face that road. The character and significance of the section of the Conservation Area where the site is located is derived from the predominant late 19th century age and broad regularity of densely packed narrow fronted houses and plots, minimal front gardens and the similar scale and form of the dwellings. The characteristic forms include the tunnel-effect created by shared two storey outriggers at the rear which are a feature of a

significant number of properties. The form of the appeal property and its typical L-shape design of rear elevation is, therefore, important and is reflected in its local listing amongst other surrounding properties of a similar character which contribute to the historic significance of the Conservation Area.

5. Saved Policy 69 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review (LPR), adopted November 1994, requires that all development shall have an adequately high standard of design taking into account, amongst other things, its context including the scale and character of its surroundings in terms of matters such as height, size and scale. Saved Policy 72 of the LPR relates specifically to extensions in residential areas and requires conformity with listed principles which include that the extension shall relate to the domestic scale, character and appearance of the street. It also seeks compatibility with the original building insofar as the architectural style, roof form, windows, detailing and materials shall normally be appropriate to the original building, particularly in conservation areas, and that in areas of specific and repetitive character, applications which may lead to an adverse cumulative effect will be refused.
6. To supplement the above, Saved Policy 85 of the LPR relates specifically to development in conservation areas and in doing so, requires a high standard of design and that development must be sympathetic to its surroundings and the conservation area as a whole. It states, amongst other things, that extensions shall normally be designed to leave the original building form pre-dominant and the form of the original roof shall normally be extended and repeated, with pitched roofs normally required. Saved Policy 87 of the LPR relates specifically to locally listed buildings and indicates that planning permission will not be granted for alterations and extensions unless features of architectural or historic interest are preserved and Policy 85 is complied with.
7. The proposed rear dormer would be of a flat roofed design and would adjoin the existing two storey shared rear outrigger. It would have a slight set down from the ridge of the main roof, a set back from the eaves and it would not extend fully to the boundary with No 42 or the gable end. Nonetheless, it would occupy the majority of the rear roof slope that is visible above the existing outrigger. As a consequence, it would be an unduly dominant, bulky and incongruous addition to the locally listed building when viewed in the context of the rear roof slopes of nearby properties which face Pageant Road. The visual contrast with the host property and those surrounding would also be emphasised by the design and scale of the rear dormer window. The uncharacteristic horizontal emphasis of the window, with a splayed section adjoining the outrigger, would appear discordant and out of place when compared with the more traditional window styles at first floor level. It follows that the rear dormer would harmfully contrast with the character and appearance of the rear elevation and roof of the dwelling and those nearby.
8. The rear dormer would not be visible from public vantage points in Pageant Road or Hart Road, due to its position on the rear roof slope and the screening afforded by surrounding tall outriggers and properties at the rear on higher land levels. However, it would be visible from several neighbouring properties, their gardens and a shared access at the rear. From those perspectives, the rear dormer would adversely affect the character and appearance of the locally listed building when viewed in the context of others surrounding. The harmful effect would not be mitigated through use of matching materials relative to the host dwelling.

9. In reaching the above findings, I have taken into account that there are consented rear dormers elsewhere at Nos 15, 23 and 32 Pageant Road. The nearest example at No 32 cannot be viewed from the appeal site due to the intervening screening provided by shared rear outriggers. It is, however, visible in the gap between Nos. 37 and 39 Hart Road. From that perspective, I observed that the existing rear dormer at No 32 is smaller and more subservient to the roof slope with window proportions that are more consistent with those at first floor level below. The dormer at No 15 was not visible from public vantage points, whilst the dormer at No 23 is only glimpsed from Albert Street and appears to be smaller than the proposal before me. In any case, the existing examples of dormers in the area are very much in a minority, have little influence on the immediate surroundings of the site and should not be seen as setting a precedent for the harm that would result from the proposal.
10. The proposal also includes removal of an existing single storey flat roofed rear extension. In that respect, whilst the single storey element beyond the main two-storey shared outrigger is a modest and subservient feature it contributes little to the character and appearance of the locally listed building as it is not an original feature. Therefore, it is suitable in principle to be demolished. The Council have offered no specific objections to its replacement with an infill extension of modest size and scale with side monopitch roof, that would follow the existing build line of the two-storey outrigger up to the side boundary of the property. Based upon the evidence before me and my own observations, I have no reason to take a different view in relation to its scale, form and materials which would be subordinate and complementary to the character and appearance of the host dwelling. Nonetheless, I have concerns that the proposed bi-fold doors on the rear elevation would appear discordant when viewed against the first floor windows. When taken with the rear dormer, the design of the glazed bi-fold doors would have a cumulative effect that would further erode the traditional character and appearance of the rear elevation of the locally listed building when viewed from the shared rear access.
11. In reaching the above findings with respect to the single storey extension, I acknowledge that there is a difference in style and appearance of properties in the wider area, together with examples of extensions and other alterations such as uPVC windows. However, the diversity of built form in the wider Conservation Area does not offer precedent for or justify the harm identified.
12. The proposed rooflights on the single storey extension, and those which would be added on the front roof slope as part of the loft conversion, would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the locally listed building or the Conservation Area as they are relatively common features of nearby properties. In addition, the proposed replacement uPVC windows in the front elevation would have a sliding sash design which would be more in-keeping with those of surrounding properties than the existing windows. Consequently, there would be some limited benefits to the appearance of the front elevation of the locally listed building when viewed from Pageant Road. However, to my mind, those positive changes of themselves do not offset or justify the harm that would otherwise arise from the proposal as previously identified.
13. As the site is in a Conservation Area, Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Rather than make the positive contribution to local character and

distinctiveness desired by paragraph 192 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the proposal would harm local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 193 of the Framework indicates that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

14. The harm caused would be significant in terms of the rear elevation and roof of the locally listed building and its immediate surroundings. However, the harm would be localised to limited viewpoints and therefore, would be less than substantial to the significance of St Albans Conservation Area as a whole. In such circumstances, paragraph 196 of the Framework requires that the less than substantial harm be weighed against public benefits.
15. The public benefits in this case are the aforementioned reinstatement of fenestration with a more traditional design to the front elevation and that the development would provide additional living space to assist the long-term future of the building in meeting modern family living requirements. In those respects, I understand and sympathise with the wishes of the appellant to provide additional space for their family and reinstate a more traditional window design to the front of the property. However, the public benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the great weight to be given to the less than substantial harm that I have otherwise identified.
16. I conclude that the development would harm the character and appearance of the host property, a locally listed building, and consequently would fail to preserve or enhance the character, appearance and significance of St Albans Conservation Area. The proposal conflicts with Policies 69, 72, 85 and 87 of the LPR in those respects. The policies are consistent with the Framework.

Other Matters

17. It is common ground between the main parties that the development would not result in an unacceptable impact on the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties in terms of matters of outlook, light and privacy. Based on the evidence before me, together with my observations of the appeal property and its relationship with those surrounding, I have no reason to take a different view. The proposal also would not increase the number of bedrooms of the property and therefore, would have little effect on existing parking conditions. However, the absence of concern in those respects is a neutral factor. Access arrangements along the existing passageway between No 44 and 46 are a private matter and not within my jurisdiction.

Conclusion

18. I have considered the public benefits of the development in assessing the proposal against the main issue. The public benefits identified would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the locally listed building and the surrounding area, including the less than substantial harm to the significance of St Albans Conservation Area.
19. For the reasons given above and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

Gareth Wildgoose

INSPECTOR