



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 3 August 2021

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/21/3271844

10 Porters Hill, Harpenden AL5 5JD

- 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 Aggie Mutuma against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref 5/20/2836, dated 24 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 25 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is a front gable extension scheme.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021. The main parties have been provided with the opportunity to comment on the relevance of this revision to the Framework to their respective cases, and I have had regard to the comments received.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a dwelling on Porters Hill, a steep street within a residential area characterised mainly by modest, two storey, semi-detached, red brick dwellings with flat facades and pitched roofs. This general form of development extends to dwellings on surrounding streets, including Noke Shot and Northfield Road.
5. A number of dwellings have been extended within the area. However, by and large, these extensions are modest in scale and the original massing of the buildings can still be appreciated. This includes the side extension and porch to the other dwelling in the pair, No 8. The area is also notable for an absence of roof additions, with the roof slopes largely unaltered, which contributes a sense of consistency to the built form that adds to the character and appearance of the area.
6. The proposal seeks to create a loft conversion with a front gable addition. The gable would extend upwards from the front elevation on the same plane, and would span the full width of the dwelling at the eaves level. A small window would be located in the gable.

7. The appeal site forms part of a run of five dwellings from Nos 8 to 16 which stand prominently in the street scene at the junction of Porters Hill and Northfield Road. The unaltered rooflines of these dwellings can be clearly seen in views from both sides on Porters Hill, and they form the terminus of long views along Northfield Road. Though not a formal group – they comprise two semi-detached pairs and a detached dwelling – they all have similar, pitched roofs and exemplify the general built form of the area in a visible location.
8. The proposed gable would represent a significant departure from the prevailing built form. It would form a conspicuous and isolated feature which would significantly alter the shape of the host dwelling and would severely unbalance the appearance of the semi-detached pair. It would also erode the consistency of roof form which exists within the immediate group from Nos 8-16. Although the gable would not add to the overall height of the dwelling, the inclusion of a window would create a visible third floor to the property, which would harmfully increase its scale relative to the two storey dwellings which characterise the area. The offset position of the window would also result in an awkward arrangement of fenestration to the front elevation which would detract from the overall appearance of the dwelling. I acknowledge that the proposal would use materials to match the existing building, but this would not mitigate the harm which would be caused by the conflicting design of the gable.
9. The appellant refers to examples of gables in the area. However, these examples appear to form part of the original design of the building, with the gables being shallow, projecting elements within wider front elevations, with the gable roofs set down from the main ridge line. Moreover, none of the examples given appear to include a third storey. Ultimately, these isolated examples are not sufficient in number that it could be said that they are characteristic of the area. Consequently, I do not find these examples to be comparable to the appeal scheme, or to establish a precedent for the proposal before me, which I have considered on its own merits.
10. For the reasons set out, I conclude that the proposed gable extension would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. This would conflict with Saved Policies 69 and 72 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 and Policies ESD1 and ESD2 of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2019. Together, these policies require developments to be visually attractive, designed to a high quality; to maintain or enhance the character of the area, having regard to the surrounding context, including scale, height, architectural style and roof form. The proposal would further conflict with the aims of the Framework to achieve high quality design in all developments.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole. This conflict is not outweighed by other material considerations in this case. Therefore, for the reasons given, and taking all relevant matters into consideration, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Savage

INSPECTOR