
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 April 2022

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26TH April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/22/3293700

12 Paxton Road, ST. ALBANS, AL1 1PF

- 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 Eales against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref 5/21/3198, dated 16 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 13 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a loft conversion to form a bedroom and en-suite.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed loft conversion on the character and appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. No 12 is an end-terraced house situated on the southern side of Paxton Road. In common with other houses along this side of the road, it has a long rear outrigger with a low hipped roof. There is a significant slope down from north to south through the plot, such that the house is set at a higher level from the properties on Old London Road to the rear. Immediately to the rear of the appeal property is a modern, low rise church building, with a large car park to its eastern side. The proposed loft conversion would involve the construction of a full width, full height dormer window across the whole of the rear roof slope.
4. Policy 69 of the Council's District Local Plan Review (LP) indicates that new development should take into account the context and materials of its surroundings. Policy 72 of the LP indicates that residential extensions should relate to the domestic scale, character and appearance of the street, and be compatible with and appropriate to the original building, particularly in conservation areas. Policy 85 of the LP indicates that, in conservation areas, permission will be granted only where a high standard of design is achieved and the proposal enhances or preserves the appearance of the conservation area. In particular, extensions should normally be designed to leave the original building form pre-dominant and the form of the original roof should normally be extended or repeated. Finally Policy 87 indicates that planning permission will not be granted for alterations and extensions to Locally Listed Buildings unless features of architectural or historic interest are preserved.

5. The Council contends that, by way of its size and flat roof design, the proposed rear dormer would fail to relate to the surrounding area and the original pitched roof of the property, which is a locally listed building. The proposal would therefore be unsympathetic to this part of the CA and would fail to preserve or enhance the designated heritage asset.
6. The appellant contends that the proposal would contribute to the quality of the local environment, and enhance the distinctiveness of the local street scene. The proposed loft conversion works would include appropriate materials which would retain original features of the property. In addition, the proposal would not breach the height of the eaves, and would not result in a disproportionate addition or of an overbearing nature. Finally, the appellant makes note of similar dormer loft conversions granted planning permission nearby at 3 Paxton Road and, more recently, 14 Lower Paxton Road.
7. The proposed dormer at the appeal property would extend across the whole width and height of the rear roof slope. The rear outrigger at the property is set a little below the eaves of the main roof and it has a very low, hipped roof, such that the proposed dormer would be clearly seen above it. There is a narrow gap between No 12 and No 14, and the side cheek of the dormer would be visible from the road, albeit only by a small amount. Moreover, the dormer would be clearly seen from Old London Road at the rear, across the open car park of the church. There are no other dormers of this scale or design along the rest of the group of houses along the south side of Paxton Road, although there is a small dormer with pitched roof and gable a few houses to the west. The proposed dormer at No 12 would, therefore, appear as a prominent and largely alien and incongruous feature on the appeal property when viewed from the south.
8. I have limited detailed information regarding the history, scale and design of the earlier nearby examples, as mentioned by the appellants, but I note that there is little or no visibility of the rear of these properties from any meaningful position, and I do not consider that these examples should be considered as precedent for the proposal at No 12.
9. In conclusion, I find that the proposed rear dormer would be a dominant and incongruous feature on the rear roof slope of the appeal property. It would not respect or reflect the prevailing character or appearance of the host property, or of the wider area around Paxton Road, where the only other rear dormers visible are smaller and of a more sympathetic design. I acknowledge that the harm caused to the CA would be less than substantial, but there are no public benefits to outweigh this harm. The proposal would, therefore, not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, and it would conflict with Policies 69, 72, 85 and 87 of the LP. Accordingly, I dismiss this appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR