



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 October 2022

by David Murray BA (Hons) DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/22/3304374

1 Browning Road, Harpenden, AL5 4TS

- 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 Paul & Jastine Airley & Barrett against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref 5/22/0772, dated 21 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is first floor side extension, single storey front extension with living accommodation above garage and front canopy porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development proposed on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Background

3. The appeal site comprises a large detached two storey property which lies on a corner site in a mainly residential part of Harpenden. The property fronts Browning Road but the side elevation faces Station Road. There is also a mature laurel hedge of varying height that sweeps around the corner fronting the pavement. It is proposed to erect a front extension to make an 'L' shape and comprising a garage, utility room and office on the ground floor and with living accommodation and a small bathroom at first floor served by an internal staircase.
4. I note that the appellants have reduced the size of the building proposed having sought pre-application advice and I have also taken account of the other extensions which have been permitted by the Council locally and I saw some of these at my site visit.

Effect on character and appearance

5. The local character of Browning Road and the adjoining street is made up of detached houses of varying design and sizes but where most now occupy most of the plot width either by their original design or through subsequent extension. On the southern side of Browning Road the houses lie at a slight angle to the road so that where the properties have been extended to the front the building tends to line up with the projection of the neighbouring property.

This layout results in a 'saw tooth' effect in the street scene as depicted on the annotated plan on page 10 of the appellant's statement prepared by Aitchison Rafferty. However as the appeal site lies at the end of this street arrangement there is no neighbouring property to off-set against. Moreover, the siting of the present house on the appeal site, together with the setting of No.2 opposite, provides a more open aspect to the start of the street scene.

6. Like the Council, I am concerned that the height, scale and projection of the new additions would result in a form of development which would dominate and be harmful to the street scene, even if the boundary hedge could be retained. The side extension to the house would be much closer to Station Road than the neighbouring properties and the proposal would lose the 'step down' formed by the present single storey garage. At the front the garage and office above would appear large and visually isolated and intrusive in the street scene and the generally open aspect would be lost.
7. I have taken account of the measurements shown in the appellants' assessment of the alignment and siting of other properties but the appeal proposal would appear materially closer to the road and more prominent than the general trend of development. I have also had regard to the other extensions mentioned but none of these appear to have the same circumstances as the appeal site as I have described above and I have considered the proposal on its individual merits.
8. Overall I find that the adverse visual impact that the proposal would have on the street scene means that it does not accord with the relevant saved policies in the St Albans District Plan Policies 69 and 72, together with Policy ESD2 of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan. There is also conflict with the guidance in section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of ensuring that new development is sympathetic to local character.
9. There are no other considerations which outweigh this policy conflict and identified harm.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons give above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Murray

INSPECTOR