
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 May 2024

by D J Barnes MBA BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/22/3295223

27 Wick Avenue, Wheathampstead, St Albans AL4 8QD

- 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 Ian Lawrence against the decision of St Albans City and District Council
 - The application Ref 5/21/2927, dated 19 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 29 December 2021.
 - The development is an extension to rear dormer window to facilitate extension to existing loft space and relocation of existing solar panels.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for an extension to rear dormer window to facilitate extension to existing loft space and relocation of existing solar panels at 27 Wick Avenue, Wheathampstead, St Albans AL4 8QD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/21/2927, dated 19 October 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan; 7737_SK04 Rev B and 7737_SK05 Rev A.

Procedural Matters

2. For reason of clarity, the description of development has been adopted from the the Council's decision notice and the appeal form.
3. The amendments of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) were published in December 2023 after the determination of the appeal application. These amendments do not alter the basis upon which this appeal has been assessed.
4. The Wheathampstead Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was made in July 2023. Although the parties have not identified any specific policies, NP Policy W9 is concerned with the high quality design of development.

Main Issue

5. It is considered that the main issue is the effects of the development on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

6. The development includes the erection of a rear roof extension to a bungalow located at a road junction within a predominantly residential area comprising similar types of properties erected in the 1950s. Several of the surrounding dwellings have been extended and altered.
7. By reason of being sited at a junction, the rear of the property is partially visible from the surrounding roads and this visibility is accentuated by the topography of the area when looking from, in particular, the south and west. Where views are available around the junction, they are partially screened by trees and hedges which project about the boundary fence. Away from the junction, views of the property and the rear dormer extension are precluded by neighbouring dwellings.
8. Planning permission was granted by the Council for an extension to a rear dormer window (Ref 5/20/1956) of a similar scale to the appeal scheme. However, reviewing the approved drawing and the 2020 photographs, it does not appear that this consent was implemented. Accordingly, and noting the Council did not grant a Certificate of Lawful Development (Ref 5/20/2409), the appeal scheme has been assessed on its own planning circumstances.
9. Reference has been made by the appellant to other alterations to dwellings in the surrounding area, including the use of grey coloured external materials. No detailed evidence about the planning circumstances has been provided about these other schemes. Although their contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area was noted during the site visit and has been taken into account in the assessment, limited weight is given to these other schemes as precedents in the determination of this appeal.
10. Within the available views from the south, principally across 29 Wick Avenue, the dormer extension is viewed against the context of the property, more particularly its roof. From this direction, the grey clad dormer is not especially conspicuous or noticeable within the streetscene. It is set away from the 2-storey rear gable rather than fully occupying the rear roofslope. The size of the property is similar in scale to, and in keeping with, other altered dwellings which could be seen during the site visit and integrates with the character and appearance of the surrounding residential area.
11. The same assessment concerning the impact on the character and appearance of the streetscene applies to viewpoints closer to the junction. When looking from the west, the dormer's grey clad cheek seen in conjunction with the host property's side elevation. Again, this cheek is not a particularly prominent feature within the streetscene above the boundary fence. The solar panels sited on the dormer's flat roof are not particularly conspicuous when viewed from locations close to the junction.
12. From the viewpoints it is evident that the dormer does extend cross the roofslope of the side hipped roof element of the property. However, the degree of encroachment is not such that this matter alone amounts to a reason for this appeal to fail in terms of not achieving an adequately high standard of design. The hipped roof element is still noticeable as a distinct feature when viewed from the available viewpoints.

13. For the reasons given, it is concluded that the development does not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the streetscene and, as such, it does not conflict with Policies 69 and 72 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review. Amongst other matters, these policies require development to have an adequately high standard of design taking into account the context of the area and for extensions to relate to the domestic scale, character and appearance of the street and be compatible with the original building. Further, it is also concluded that the appeal scheme does not conflict with NP Policy W9 concerning development being of high quality which responds to, and integrates with, its surroundings and is in keeping with the scale and existing character of the buildings and layout of in the area.

Conditions

14. The Council has suggested several conditions in the event this appeal succeeds which have been assessed against the tests in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. For reasons of clarity, a condition is necessary to secure the erection of the development in accordance with the approved drawings. No condition is necessary concerning the choice of external materials because the rear dormer extension has been erected.
15. For the reasons given, it is concluded that this appeal should be allowed.

D J Barnes

INSPECTOR