



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 March 2025

by Philip Willmer BSc Dip Arch RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/25/3358917

7 Gibbs Close, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 1FA.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Oliver Leigh against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/24/1487 DC4.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion with side dormer window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a loft conversion with side dormer window at 7 Gibbs Close, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 1FA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/24/1487 DC4, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) No development shall commence until details of the metal cladding to the dormers hereby permitted has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall include material specification, colour, 1:50 scale elevations of the front elevation and cheeks of the dormers together with 1:20 sections through the cill, jambs and head of the windows and a section through the cladding to illustrate how the joints/seams of the cladding will be formed, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 3) All materials other than the dormer cladding, to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 4) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans, drawings: 5604/001, 5640/200 and location plan scale 1:250 dated 29 August 2024.

Main Issue

2. I consider the main issue to be the effect of the proposed development on the architectural integrity of the host property and thereby whether it would serve to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Harpenden Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property, 7 Gibbs Close, is described as a two-storey, two-bedroom flat. It is located on the corner of a U-shaped terrace. It is part of a contemporary development of some 37 new dwellings which also includes flats formed within an existing listed building on the site. The development is located within the Harpenden Conservation Area.
4. Due to the topography of the site the rear of the property is set well down behind a deep retaining wall and is overlooked from the Harpenden station car park at the higher level. In addition, there are some very limited views of the rear of the property from inside the development.
5. The appellant proposes the conversion of the existing roof space, including the construction of two side dormers. The flat roof dormers would be built into either side of the rear facing gable, their roofs would be set down below the ridge line of the gable roof, well back from the gable wall and positioned above the eaves line of the roof. The dormers would be finished in metal cladding, and overall would reflect the contemporary design and styling of the existing development.
6. As I observed there are metal clad dormers elsewhere within the development some with pitched slate roof and others such as at Standridge House that are similar in both form and finish to those proposed here.
7. I do not consider, given the height and position of the dormers on the roof that they would, as asserted by the Council, appear unacceptably bulky. Nor given their modern contemporary design in line with the architectural style of the development, and as similar metal clad dormers can be found elsewhere they would appear as contrived additions.
8. I therefore consider that the proposed development would not cause harm to the architectural integrity of the host property, and thereby while they would not enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, they would not harm it. I have therefore concluded on the main issue that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal would therefore accord with the objectives of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies ESD1 and ESD2 of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2033, Saved Policies 69, 72 and 85 of the City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review (Adopted 30 November 1994) as they relate to, along with other things, the quality of development and the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Conditions

9. I have considered the conditions suggested by the Council in light of the advice in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. In the interests of precision and enforceability, I have amended the Council's suggested wording where appropriate.
10. To ensure a high quality development, I shall include a condition about the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the dormers. While the Council have asked for photographic examples of the

cladding proposed I consider that scaled drawings illustrating the detailing of the cladding, jointing and general detailing would be more appropriate in this case.

11. In the interests of certainty, I shall also impose a condition requiring the development to be undertaken in accordance with the approved plans.

Conclusions

12. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Philip Willmer

INSPECTOR