



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2025

by G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/25/3364876

60 Verulam Road, St. Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 4DH

- 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 Nicholas Charles Howes against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/2024/2016.
 - The development proposed is a two storey and single storey rear extensions plus front facing roof light, removal of chimney and alterations to openings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area, including the Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. No. 60 is a detached house with a distinctive form and character, which differs from the other properties along Verulam Road. It is a relatively modest building dating from the 19th Century. It has a steeply pitched roof with the first floor served by dormers to the front and a central two-storey projection to the rear. It has notable architectural detailing, including feature brick courses, leaded light windows and large octagonal chimney stacks.
4. There is some disagreement between the parties regarding the original plan form. Nevertheless, it is apparent, and visible from the different bricks, that the section to the rear, northwest corner is a later addition. The proposal would infill the other corner (northeast), creating three gabled projections to the rear. The existing central element, which is to be extended, along with the new two-storey addition and single-storey elements, would project 7m from the main rear elevation. This scale of development would add significant bulk to the property and would fully consume the original rear façade.
5. The extent of the rear projections would effectively align with the rear elevation of the neighbouring property, although that is a traditional terraced house and its elongated plan form is very different to the appeal property. Moreover, the Council's concern is with the depth of the extensions and the relationship with the host property, rather than the neighbours or the plot.
6. The rear projections would be offset and would be slightly set down from the ridge line, although visually this would be limited, and they would not read as subordinate

additions. In the context of extension design, this seeks to ensure that the original property remains the prominent element. Having regard to the combined height, depth and form of the extensions, I find that the considerable massing would dominate and overwhelm the building, significantly unbalancing its proportions to the detriment of its character and appearance.

7. While the existing central element has a blank rear façade, and there would be compatibility with the existing materials and detailing, including some enhancements in relation to the fenestration, the extent of the extensions would diminish the integrity and legibility of the building.
8. The property is located within the St. Albans Conservation Area. This covers a wide area that includes the city's historic core. I have not been provided with a formal designation statement or character appraisal, however, it appears to me that the significance of the Conservation Area lies in the mix of buildings, including their architecture, and the street patterns that reflect the evolution of the town.
9. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Although not statutorily or locally listed, the appeal property clearly possesses historical and architectural qualities that contribute to the area's special interest, and, in my view, it makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
10. The extensions are located to the rear, but based on my observations, there would be some partial views from Church Crescent. The gap between Nos. 4 and 6 provides a vista across the rear of the appeal property and the properties beyond, which include the neighbouring terrace and part of The Old Church, a listed building. The proposed projection would visually restrict some of this view, and with the removal of the chimney there would be a loss of articulation and interest to the roofscape. As such, there would be some public appreciation of the scale extension in relation to the existing building, as well as from the neighbouring properties in Church Crescent, which back onto the appeal site. Therefore, I agree with the Council that there would be some harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the significance of which includes the architectural interest of the buildings.
11. The degree of harm to the Conservation Area as a whole would be less than substantial. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 202) this harm is to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development.
12. The proposal would provide additional and improved living accommodation for the occupiers of the dwelling, but this is essentially a private rather than a public benefit. I acknowledge the appellant's commitment to the building, which had been neglected, and to improving the property's functionality, particularly in terms of future-proofing. The preservation of the building and alterations to make the dwelling more accessible and inclusive would be a wider social advantage that could be regarded as a public benefit. However, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that this would be dependent on an extension of the scale and design proposed. Furthermore, repairs and internal works to the property are already in progress.

13. In line with paragraph 212 of the Framework, great weight is to be given to the conservation of heritage assets, and I do not find that the identified public benefits outweigh the harm to the Conservation Area.
14. Overall, the scale and form of the development would be disproportionate and harmful to the host property, including its architectural form, and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The development would therefore be contrary to saved Policies 69 and 72 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 (Local Plan), which promotes a high standard of design, require development to take account of the scale and character of its surroundings, and have compatibility with original building, particularly in Conservation Areas. There would also be conflict with Local Plan policy 85, relating to Conservation Areas, which supports development that is sympathetic to its surroundings and the Conservation Area as a whole.

Other Matters

15. Reference is made to a 1979 planning permission for extensions to the rear, which would form three gabled projections. This development was not completed, and a single-storey extension was added later. The appellant suggests that the consent is extant. It is not a remit of this householder appeal to determine whether it would be lawful development; notwithstanding this, there is no indication by the appellant that they would implement that scheme if planning permission is refused. Additionally, with less depth of projection, I do not consider that it would be more harmful than the proposed scheme. Therefore, whilst acknowledging the similarities in the design, it would not constitute a genuine fallback, and I have not attached weight to it as such.
16. The appellant has referred me to an example of what they consider to be a significant scale of extension to another property, Mitchell Hall, located opposite. Whilst I acknowledge from the photographs and what I saw on site that the building has been substantially altered, the background to that development is not before me, and each proposal is to be considered on its own merits. Similarly, the details of the list of locally listed buildings and any reasons for excluding the appeal property are not before me. However, in line with the reason for refusal, I have considered the impact of the development in relation to the Conservation Area as the heritage asset.
17. The appellant has offered a number of alterations to the proposal, including the retention of the rear chimney and the omission of the rooflight to the front elevation. In my view, both of these would be enhancements to the design, and due to their nature, could be secured via a condition. However, these features would not fully overcome the harm I have found and therefore do not alter my findings on the main issue. Additionally, support from neighbours does not alter my assessment in relation to the development plan.

Conclusion

18. I have found that the proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole, and material considerations do not outweigh that finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Ellis INSPECTOR