
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 8 September 2014

by Thomas Shields MA DipURP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 4 November 2014

Appeal A: APP/B1930/A/14/2212772

26-32 Fish Street, Redbourn, St. Albans, AL3 7LP

- 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 Oakbridge Homes Ltd against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/13/1280, dated 17 May 2013, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2013.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing buildings and removal of the scrap yard and erection of 12 apartments including parking, amenity space and access.
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Appeal B: APP/B1930/E/14/2212778

26-32 Fish Street, Redbourn, St. Albans, AL3 7LP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant conservation area consent.
 - The appeal is made by Oakbridge Homes Ltd against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/13/1292CA, dated 17 May 2013, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2013.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing buildings and removal of the scrap yard and erection of 12 apartments including parking, amenity space and access.
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Decision

1. **Appeal A is dismissed. Appeal B is dismissed.**

Preliminary Matter

2. Notwithstanding the appellant's description of the proposal for Appeal B, as set out in the fourth bullet above, the appeal relates only to conservation area consent for demolition of the buildings on the appeal site.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in both appeals is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Redbourn Conservation Area (RCA).

Reasons

Appeal A

4. The appeal site lies within the RCA and comprises a rectangular parcel of land formerly in use as a scrap yard with vehicular access directly off Fish Street.
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It includes 2 semi-detached 2 storey cottages, 26-28 Fish Street, located towards the front of the site on one side of the access. On the other side of the access is 32 Fish Street, originally a 2 storey dwelling and last in use as offices.

5. Fish Street connects with High Street to the east and with Redbourn Common to the west. The character and appearance of the immediate area around the appeal site is mainly residential, with the northern side of the street consisting mainly of small scale 2 storey terraced properties of traditional design facing onto the street, and also a church. The southern side of Fish Street differs from the northern side in that building orientation varies, and there are spaces between some of the buildings allowing views through to the rear.
6. The Council acknowledges that there have been a number of alterations and modern additions to Nos. 26-28 and hence their contribution value to the significance of the RCA is very much diminished. I agree with that view.
7. However, No. 32 is a traditional Victorian cottage constructed in red brick, having a gable-pitched slate roof, and timber sliding sash windows with 8-over-8 panes in the east and west elevations. It is positioned with its blank gable end facing the street and adjoins the rear edge of the public footpath. I consider it retains much of its original qualities and character and contributes greatly to the character and appearance of the street scene and the RCA. I consider that No. 32 is a non-designated heritage asset of some significance.
8. Paragraph 135 of the Framework¹ sets out that in weighing applications that affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
9. The proposal would demolish all existing buildings on the appeal site followed by redevelopment with a scheme for 12 apartments. The scheme would be a continuous 2 to 2.5 storey block positioned along the front of the site with a communal amenity area and parking spaces to the rear. The proposed use of a variety of materials and finishes to the front elevation would reflect the mixed appearance of properties on the northern side of the street. In support of the appeal I also acknowledge that there would be a public benefit from the replacement of the unsightly existing scrap yard use, and the proposal would provide 12 additional housing units in Redbourn in close proximity to its shops and facilities. Accordingly, I attach some weight to these considerations.
10. However, against the positive aspects of the proposal the 2.5 storey height along the frontage would be visually incongruous with the existing small scale 1 to 2 storey properties along Fish Street. In addition, the proposed internal layout of the scheme provides only one front door onto Fish Street, a feature which in my view undermines the intended terraced appearance of the scheme. Added to my concerns would be the loss of No. 32 Fish Street, a non-designated heritage asset which, as I have previously found, contributes greatly to the character and appearance of the RCA.
11. I conclude overall that the proposal would not relate well to the character and appearance of Fish Street and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the RCA. As such, it would conflict with the aims and

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

objectives of Policies 69, 70, and 85 of the City and District of St Albans District Local Plan Review (1994) (LP) which, taken together, seek to ensure that new development takes into account the scale and character of its surroundings including in terms of height and scale, and achieves a high standard of design, particularly in Conservation Areas.

Other Matters

12. The Council's second reason for refusal relates to the requirement for a S106 Obligation for infrastructure provision. However, I have not been provided with a completed and signed S106 Obligation, and I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons. Consequently, there is no need for me to consider this matter further.

Conclusion

13. For all the above reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude overall that Appeal A should be dismissed.

Appeal B

Reasons

14. The Council do not object to the demolition of the outbuildings or garages on the site and I have no reason to disagree with that view.
15. I have already concluded that Appeal A should fail. Although the harm to the RCA as a designated heritage asset would be less than substantial, for the reasons set out above at paragraphs 4-11, and in the absence of an acceptable scheme for redevelopment of the site, I consider that the proposed demolition would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the RCA in conflict with LP Policies 85 and 87, and paragraphs 132 to 135 of the Framework.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons I conclude that conservation area consent should be refused. Accordingly, Appeal B is dismissed.

Thomas Shields

INSPECTOR