
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 October 2016

by Stephen Hawkins MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 24th October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/D/16/3156107

16 Blacklands Drive, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 8EU

- 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 Kalbir Bains against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 9067/APP/2016/1141, dated 16 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 24 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension, first floor side extension and detached garage involving demolition of existing rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and that of the surrounding area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The host dwelling is a semi-detached property of period design, with projecting front bays and a hipped roof form. Its form and design is mirrored in the attached dwelling. This creates a balanced appearance, which is repeated in the equally spaced pairs of dwellings of similar design on both sides of Blacklands Drive. The host dwelling occupies a corner plot which is wider than that typical of most dwellings in the locality but is consistent with some other corner plots. A single storey extension formerly used as a garage occupies most of the space between the side of the host dwelling and the boundary with Meadow View Road. The undeveloped space above the former garage adds to the spacious feel around the road junction. All of the above factors contribute to the largely harmonious suburban characteristics of the locality.
 4. The proposed first floor side extension would be above the former garage. The hipped roof form, roof pitch and other aspects of its detailed design, including the window style and proportions and the use of complementary external materials, would echo the appearance of the host dwelling.
 5. However, the front elevation of the side extension would be aligned with the front elevation of the host dwelling. Its ridge line would be aligned with the highest part of the host dwelling's roof. As the side extension would occupy all
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of the space over the former garage, it would have a substantial width. Altogether, this would give the side extension a significant overall size and bulk, which would be unrelieved by any articulation in its design. Consequently, due to its overall scale the side extension would be viewed in the street scene as an overlarge addition which would not be subordinate to the host dwelling and would disrupt its current balanced appearance. This would unacceptably harm the inherent character of the host dwelling. As a result, the side extension would appear as an incongruous feature in the street scene and it would be entirely at odds with the otherwise generally harmonious characteristics of the surroundings.

6. Extending above the former garage as proposed would leave a gap of just over one metre between the flank wall of the side extension and the boundary with Meadow View Road. Due to its position relative to the boundary, the side extension would stand well forward of the front elevations of most of the properties along Meadow View Road. Consequently, the size and bulk of the side extension would appear as a prominent feature in the street scene. Moreover, because it would extend two storey built form across almost the full width of the appeal site, the existing sense of spaciousness would be substantially eroded by the side extension. As a result, the side extension would create a much more enclosed and urbanised feel in the street scene. Following removal of the trees and shrubs along the boundary with Meadow View Road, there is no mature planting which could assist in softening the appearance of the side extension. For all the above reasons, the side extension would therefore be perceived as an alien feature in the street scene, entirely at odds with the character and appearance of its surroundings.
7. In November 2015, the Council granted planning permission at the appeal site for, amongst other matters, a first floor side extension of a different design¹. In the event that the appeal is dismissed, I consider that there is a reasonable likelihood of the permitted scheme being built out. I have therefore given the 'fallback position' of the permitted scheme substantial weight. However, the plans for the permitted scheme show a first floor side extension which would be set back substantially from the front elevation of the host dwelling, with a much lower roof line, set in just under a metre further from the side boundary. Therefore, the permitted scheme is materially different in terms of its overall scale and design and its effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene, to the appeal scheme.
8. During my site visit, I also observed the first floor extension on the opposite corner at 18 Blacklands Drive. This exhibits similarities with the appeal scheme. Even so, the mere existence of a similar extension is not a sufficient justification to allow the appeal. In my view, the extension at No 18 is not typical of the character and appearance of development in the surrounding area, including other corner properties in the locality. Therefore, it does not represent an example of development which should inevitably be repeated. The Council say that No 18 was extended prior to the adoption of their current Local Plan. In the absence of any other details, I am not convinced that similar national and local policies and guidance would have applied in relation to that extension. In view of all the above, I have given the extension at No 18 limited weight.

¹ Council reference 9067/APP/2015/2863.

9. I acknowledge that the host dwelling and surrounding properties are not protected by any statutory designation and that the Council had no objection to the proposed single storey rear extension or the detached garage. I have found no reason to disagree with their findings in the above respect. Nevertheless, these matters do not affect my conclusion that the proposed first floor side extension would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and that of the surrounding area.
10. Consequently, the proposal would fail to accord with Policy BE1 of the adopted Hillingdon Local Plan 2012 (LP), as it would not be of a high quality design that enhanced the local distinctiveness of the area and contributed to a sense of place, it has not been designed to be appropriate to the identity and context of Hillingdon's buildings, townscapes and views, it would not make a positive contribution to the local area in terms of its form, scale and materials and it would not improve the quality of the public realm.
11. The proposal would also fail to accord with saved Policy BE13 of the Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan (UDP), as its appearance would not harmonise with the existing street scene. Further, the proposal would not harmonise with the scale, form, architectural composition and proportions of the original dwelling and it would therefore fail to accord with saved UDP Policy BE15. The proposal would also not accord with saved UDP Policy BE19, because it would not complement or improve the amenity and character of the area.
12. Moreover, the proposal would be not be consistent with the Council's adopted Hillingdon Design and Accessibility Statement (HDAS) 'Residential Extensions' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). At 5.6, the SPD advises that first floor side extensions to semi-detached dwellings should be set back at least one metre from the main front building line to ensure a subordinate appearance to the existing house. At 5.8 and 5.9, the SPD advises that the roof height of a first floor side extension should have a subordinate hipped roof. Whilst the proposal would respect the SPD at 5.1 as the former garage is more than one metre from the boundary, at 5.3 the SPD nevertheless advises that the openness of corner plots should be maintained.
13. Consequently, the proposal would also be inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) core principle at paragraph 17 to seek and secure high quality design and the requirement to respond to local character and history, reflecting the identity of local surroundings and materials whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation, at paragraph 58. Moreover, the proposal would be inconsistent with paragraph 60, as it would not promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

Other matters

14. The Council had no objection to the proposal on grounds of harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of adjoining dwellings, reduction in external amenity space or the adequacy of parking provision. I have not found any reason to disagree with their assessment of these matters. I have also taken the appellant's comments into account regarding the improvements to the health and wellbeing of the existing and future occupants of the host dwelling that the proposal would offer and the shortcomings of the permitted scheme. However, none of these matters outweigh my findings on the main issue.

Conclusion

15. The proposal would fail to accord with the Development Plan, the Framework and the Council's adopted SPD.
16. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Stephen Hawkins

INSPECTOR