
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2016

by Jason Whitfield BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 2nd December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/W/16/3155657

67 Headstone Gardens, Harrow HA2 6PJ

- 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 and Mrs Sivaguru Subramaniam against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/5985/15, dated 30 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 4 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as "conversion of dwelling house into 4 self-contained flats, single storey front elevation, 2 storey side and rear extension and single storey rear extension; amenity area, parking and cycle and refuse and recyclable storage; external alterations (demolition of existing commercial garage)."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site has been the subject of a previous, unsuccessful application for a conversion to 5 flats including single storey front extension; two storey side to rear extension and single storey rear extension; alterations and extension to roof to form gable end; rooflights in front and rear roofslopes; amenity area parking and cycle/bin storage; and, external alterations (Ref: P/4187/14). The application which is subject of this appeal sought to address the reasons for refusal in the earlier application. One of those reasons for refusal stated: "*The proposed extensions, by reason of their excessive scale, bulk and massing and unacceptable design would give rise to a form of development which would be disproportionate, incongruous in appearance and overly dominant. The proposed extensions would appear visually obtrusive and overbearing to the detriment of the character and appearance of the existing dwellinghouse and the streetscene, and the visual amenities of the area, contrary to policies 7.4 B and 7.6.B of The London Plan 2011, policies CS1.B of the Harrow Core Strategy (2012), policy DM1 of the Development Management Policies Local Plan 2013 and the adopted Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guide 2010.*"

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
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Reasons

4. The appeal property is a two-storey, semi-detached house with a hipped roof. It is sited upon a large, triangular shaped plot with a hard surfaced side and rear yard area. To the east of the appeal site is a small parade of commercial properties with residential properties on the upper floors known as Arrowhead Parade. There is another shopping parade opposite. Nevertheless, the area around the appeal site along Headstone Gardens is predominately characterised by two-storey semi-detached and terraced dwellings. The properties are generally of modest proportions and in several instances there are garages or other extensions which infill the ground floor space between unattached properties.
5. The proposal seeks to convert the property to four flats. To facilitate the conversion, it is proposed to extend the property with a two-storey extension to the side and rear with an additional single storey element to the rear.
6. I note that the proposed extensions have been reduced in scale from the previously refused scheme. Nevertheless, the extensions would project around 3.65m from the side wall of the property with an overall width of around 10m. Furthermore, the proposal would extend around 7m in total depth from the rear wall. Moreover, the first floor element would extend across the rear of the property with a width of around 6.9m and a depth of around 3m. To the side, the first floor element would have a depth of around 10.65m. This would be a considerable increase in the overall footprint and massing of the dwelling. Consequently, the proposal would result in discordant and bulky additions to the property which would subsume the original dwelling. This would be in stark contrast to the prevailing character of surrounding properties.
7. The proposal would also occupy a significantly increased proportion of the overall plot. Whilst I note that when viewed from the rear, the bulk of the proposal would be screened from the houses in Brook Drive by trees, the spacing between the property and Arrowhead Parade means it would be visible within the street scene to passing motorists, pedestrians and neighbouring residents from certain vantage points. As a result, it would, in my view, appear as a prominent and incongruous addition to the property.
8. A small front extension projecting around 0.4m is also proposed. The Council has raised no objections to this aspect of the proposal and on the evidence before me I have no reason to disagree. However, the front extension would be intrinsically linked to the overall appeal scheme and would not, in my view, be functionally severable from the remainder of the proposal. A split decision would not therefore be appropriate in this instance.
9. I conclude, therefore, that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would, as a result, conflict with Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan¹ which state that buildings should be of the highest design and architectural quality. It would also conflict with Policies CS1 of the Harrow Core Strategy 2012 (CS) and DM1 of the Development Management Policies Local Plan 2013 (DMPLP) which seek to achieve a high standard of design which does not harm the character of an area.

¹ The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations since 2011, 2016

Other Matters

10. I acknowledge the relatively sustainable location of the appeal site and the modest contribution the scheme would make towards boosting the supply of housing. However, I consider that the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.
11. I also note that the proposal would not have a significant effect on the living conditions of neighbours, that it would provide an adequate standard of accommodation for future occupiers, and that the proposed parking arrangements would not have a harmful effect on highway safety. However, the lack of harm in respect of these matters does not outweigh the harm in respect of the character and appearance of the area.
12. The appellant has made reference to a number of examples within Harrow where large two storey side and rear extensions to single family dwellings, have been granted planning permission. However, I have been provided with limited detail of those examples and cannot, therefore, be sure that they are comparable in circumstances to the appeal proposal. In any case, I have considered this appeal on its own merits.
13. I appreciate that that the appellant received contrasting pre-application advice from the Council. However, the Council are not duty bound to accept such advice and consequently, I afford this matter limited weight.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, and having considered all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jason Whitfield

INSPECTOR