

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 December 2016

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 04 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/16/3158628

230 Swakeleys Road, Ickenham, Hillingdon UB10 8AX

- 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 Ash Properties Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 11112/APP/2015/3774, dated 9 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 13 April 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing building and erection of two and a half storey building containing 6 x two bedroom and 3 x one bedroom units with associated parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of the proposal varies between the application form and the subsequent documents. I have used the description on the appeal form as it describes the proposal more fully.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within a predominantly residential area. The existing property at 230 Swakeleys Road would be demolished, and the development would create a new block of nine flats. No 230 is a detached dwelling set back from the road within a spacious plot. Its relatively low height renders it an unobtrusive element in the streetscape.
 5. I accept that the development would be built of brick, and so would reflect the predominant materials in the area. Whilst it would be located further back on the plot, it would sit broadly in line with the neighbouring property at 228 Swakeleys Road. However, in terms of height and overall scale, it would be significantly larger than many of the nearby properties in the surrounding area.
 6. To the south-west of the appeal site, the terraced houses on Hetherington Way are of a similar height to No 230. The abrupt increase in height between these and the new development would be visually jarring within the street scene.
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The development would be T-shaped, and the large south-west section, which steps forward almost to the front boundary of the site, and would be a particularly bulky and incongruous addition to the street.

7. Whilst Swakeleys Road incorporates a mix of building types and styles, the relatively modest scale of the houses, and the predominantly plain, simple roof forms are characteristics which provide visual unity. The development would be two storeys in height, but the habitable roof would incorporate large front dormers with tall glazed windows. These features would be markedly at odds with the prevailing character of the neighbouring buildings. I accept that the development would have a residential appearance, but the substantially increased size of the proposed structure, and particularly its roof, would not complement the scale of the adjacent buildings, or respect the established built form in this part of Swakeleys Road.
8. The Council's document entitled 'Hillingdon Design and Accessibility Statement (HDAS) Supplementary Planning Document – Residential Layouts' (SPD, July 2006) states that the redevelopment for flats of more than 10% of properties on a residential street is unlikely to be acceptable. Where the street is more than 1km long, consideration will be based on an assessment of the properties within 500m to either side of the proposed development site.
9. On this basis, the Council concludes that, with the appeal scheme, the percentage of flatted schemes either built or being built within 1km would increase from 9.6% to 11.5%. The percentage would rise to 13.5% if the permitted scheme at 277 Swakeleys Road¹ is taken into account. At paragraph 3.1, the SPD states that redevelopment proposals will be considered against the need to balance any increase in residential density against the possible impact on the capacity, character and amenity of the area as a whole.
10. I have had regard to the appeal decision at 16 & 18 Kingsend², and I note the inspector's conclusion that the figure of 10% is somewhat arbitrary, and should be regarded as a guideline. I am mindful that, whilst I have identified harm to the character and appearance of the area, no negative impacts arising from the scheme on amenity or capacity in the area have been identified by the Council. Therefore, I am satisfied that the 10% figure should be regarded as a material consideration, but not as a determinative factor in itself.
11. My attention has been drawn to a number of planning permissions granted for other flatted developments in the area. 277 Swakeleys Road was considered as an outline proposal, and therefore I am unable to be certain that it offers a direct parallel to the appeal scheme before me. At 209 Swakeleys Road, planning permission was granted in 2014³ for a two storey building with habitable roofspace to provide six new flats. In 2013, planning permission was granted for a flatted scheme at 228 Swakeleys Road, adjacent to the appeal site. The full circumstances in which these proposals were found to be acceptable are not before me. However, they serve to demonstrate that such developments are in the minority within the area. The development at No 228 does not appear to be typical of the local characteristics in the area, and therefore its presence would not justify the repetition of a similar proposal which would have an incongruous impact on its surroundings.

¹ APP/R5510/W/15/3136391

² APP/R5510/A/13/2197430

³ 38490/APP/2013/3223

12. For those reasons, I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policy BE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (November 2012), insofar as it requires new development to enhance the local distinctiveness of the area. It would further conflict with Policies BE13 and BE19 of the London Borough of Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan (adopted 1998) Saved Policies 27th September 2007, which respectively resist any development which would fail to harmonise with the existing street scene, and seek to ensure that new development within residential areas complements or improves the amenity and character of the area.

Other Matters

13. The scheme would reuse previously developed land, and would contribute a variety of residential accommodation, in the form of one and two bedroom units, to the local housing supply. However, these benefits would not outweigh the harm I have identified.
14. The Council are concerned that the separation distance between the new building and No 228 would be insufficient to ensure well defined gaps between the built forms. However, it appears from the plans that the proposed gap would be of a very similar dimension to that which currently exists between the two properties, and so would not be unduly harmful. The Council are also concerned about the impact of the proposal on the Gospel Oak area, which lies just outside the appeal site. However, I consider that the retention of planting within the scheme would be sufficient to protect the visual amenity of the Gospel Oak area. In the event that the scheme were to be found otherwise acceptable, I do not consider that these matters in themselves would be so harmful as to warrant the withholding of planning permission.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR