
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2017

by Michael Moffoot DipTP MRTPI DipMgt MCMI

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

Decision date: 8th February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/16/3161743

The Spotted Dog, Brakespear Road North, Harefield UB9 6ND

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Stewart Bradford (Howarth Homes) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref: 23120/APP/2016/2509 is dated 28 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'demolition of bed & breakfast and redevelopment to provide 7 apartments, amenity space and car parking'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The Council confirms that, had it been in a position to determine the planning application at appeal, permission would have been refused on the grounds that the proposal: (i) would be an incongruous form of development and materially harmful to the character of the Harefield Village Conservation Area and local area generally; and (ii) would not deliver a suitable standard of living accommodation for future occupiers of the development.
3. Accordingly, the main issues in this case are:
 - (i) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with particular reference to the Harefield Village Conservation Area; and
 - (ii) whether the development would provide satisfactory living conditions for future residents, with particular reference to privacy, noise and disturbance, outlook and private amenity space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is prominently located on the eastern edge of the Conservation Area with frontage and access to Brakespear Road North close to the entrance to the village and within the built-up limits of the settlement. This part of the Conservation Area is characterised by linear residential development on the north side of the main road largely comprising two-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings of varying age, design, materials and form set on generous
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plots that back on to estate development. They include The Old Work House, a fine traditional 2-storey building of red brick construction under a clay tiled roof with gabled dormers. Open countryside to the south of this stretch of Brakespear Road North, and within the Conservation Area, is punctuated by cricket and football grounds and associated buildings together with a cluster of dwellings at Dairy Farm Lane and Hambleton Close. This rural fringe contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

5. The existing building on the appeal site sits comfortably within this context. It is a plain, asymmetrical, two-storey structure finished in white render and brick with a distinctive hipped roof clad in plain tiles, three prominent chimneys and flat roofed additions to the rear. A hardsurfaced area to the side of the building leads to a car park at the back contained by hedges, bushes and timber fencing. Retention of the former public house signage acknowledges its historical use. Whilst not statutorily or locally listed, the building makes a positive if modest contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.
6. Following demolition of the existing building, the appeal proposal would provide seven, two-bedroomed apartments over three floors including accommodation in the main roofspace. The building would feature a large projecting gable to the symmetrical front elevation and a slightly lower element to the rear. The existing access would lead to a parking area, cycle store and a landscaped amenity space to the rear of the building.
7. The prominence of the site close to the edge of the village, where built development gives away to open countryside, renders it a notable component in the street scene. This significance is augmented by inclusion of the site within the Conservation Area, which requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. The *National Planning Policy Framework* ('the Framework') states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It also indicates that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area.
8. The new building would be noticeably bulkier than the existing one, with a wider front elevation, deeper plan form and a substantial crown roof with a slightly higher ridge line. The building would project further forward than the existing building and its visual impact would be compounded by the assertive front gable feature, which limits the scope for effective landscaping along the frontage of the site. The overall design lacks finesse and architectural quality and detailing, and it seems to me that the proposal comprises an exercise in accommodating a building on the site without due consideration for its surroundings or its setting within the Conservation Area. The crown roof would be an especially discordant and dominant feature in an area where simpler hipped and gabled roof forms are to be found, and the elevational treatment to the front in particular lacks refinement and interest. Accordingly, the building would fail to respect its local context and the Conservation Area as a heritage asset.

9. Drawing these findings together, I conclude on the first issue that the proposed development would seriously harm the character and appearance of the area and would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Harefield Village Conservation Area. As such, it would conflict with Policies HE1 and BE1 of Part 1 of the Local Plan¹ which, amongst other things, require new development to improve and maintain the quality of the built environment, achieve a high quality design which enhances local distinctiveness, and conserve and enhance the Borough's designated heritage assets such as conservation areas. It would also conflict with similar objectives in saved policies BE4 and BE13 of the Local Plan (Part 2)² which expect new development within conservation areas to preserve or enhance features which contribute to their special architectural and visual qualities, and harmonise with the existing street scene.
10. Although the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset as described in paragraph 134 of the Framework, this harm is not outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme comprising the provision of new housing to meet local need and a contribution to housing mix in the Borough. Furthermore, as the proposal involves demolition of the existing building the appellant is required to demonstrate clear and convincing justification for the loss in accordance with paragraph 132 of the Framework. I do not find that such justification has been convincingly argued in this case.

Living conditions

11. In relation to flats, paragraph 4.17 of the Council's *Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Layouts*³ (SPD) states that developments should incorporate usable, attractively laid out and conveniently located garden space in relation to the units they serve. For a two-bedroomed flat the guidance requires 25m² of garden space.
12. There is some dispute between the main parties as to whether or not the appeal proposal would meet this space standard and thus comply with the SPD. However, it is highly unlikely that the landscaped area to the front and side of the building would be used as garden space by occupiers of the apartments given its restricted shape and size and close proximity to the road. In functional terms the area to the front would provide access to the bin store and landscaping, whilst the area to the side would lie between the new building and a garage and would not provide an attractive amenity space.
13. The garden area to the rear of the building would be reasonably accessible for residents of the flats and more usable in spatial terms than the area to the front. However, it would adjoin the car park, and the coming and going of vehicles and pedestrians would not be conducive to the enjoyment of the area for its users. Although there may be recreational land, footpaths and a village green within walking distance of the appeal site it would not compensate for the paucity of on-site amenity space to serve the development.

¹ Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 1 - Strategic Policies (2012)

² Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2 - Saved UDP Policies (2012)

³ Hillingdon Design and Accessibility Statement (HDAS) Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Layouts (2006)

14. The access drive would immediately adjoin bedroom and bathroom windows to Flat 3. This would result in noise and disturbance for the occupiers from traffic and pedestrian activity, especially late at night, and also loss of privacy. This adds weight to my concerns regarding the implications of the proposal for residents' living conditions. The Council has also cited loss of outlook from the flats but has not expanded upon this concern, and I see no reason why this would result in this case.
15. For these reasons, I conclude on the second issue that the proposed development would fail to provide satisfactory living conditions for future residents. It therefore runs counter to policies BE19, BE20, BE21, BE23 and BE24 of Part 2 of the Local Plan which, amongst other things, seek to safeguard residents' amenity and secure adequate amenity space. Conflict with similar objectives in Policy 3.5 of *The London Plan* (2015) would also occur.

Other Matters

16. I see no objections in principle to flatted development on the site given the residential character of the area. The proposal would not materially increase noise and disturbance for surrounding residents or compromise their privacy. Although the proposal involves felling of trees, they are of limited amenity value and replacement trees could be required by planning condition were the appeal to succeed.
17. The proposal would not result in a material increase in traffic to that generated by the former public house on the site. The proposed parking would generally be adequate to serve the development and any overspill parking could be accommodated on secondary roads nearby. As such, the scheme would not prejudice highway safety.
18. Finally, no evidence is before me to show that the loss of the bed and breakfast business as a result of the development would compromise the provision of such facilities in the area.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the proposal is unacceptable and the appeal should fail.

Michael Moffoot

Inspector