
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2017

by Zoe Raygen Dip URP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 10 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/16/3165219

Hillsfoot, 23 Orley Farm Road, Harrow HA1 3PF

- 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 S Clarke against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/3621/16, dated 27 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is replacement of flat roof with pitched roof to existing garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the South Hill Avenue Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The South Hill Avenue Conservation Area (CA) consists of a variety of late Victorian and Edwardian buildings on South Hill Avenue, the architecture of which contributes to an Arts and Crafts feel. These are complimented by a distinctive green streetscape that provides a pleasant backdrop to the buildings. Properties built on Orley Farm Road and Hill Close are later and inspired by the 'Garden Suburb' ideal. The cottage style properties are set in spacious plots behind wide grass verges and with well stocked gardens and a leafy streetscape creating an open spacious character and appearance.
 4. Hillsfoot forms such a property set back in its plot with parking to the front and a wide planted grass verge. It has garage to the side but in front of the house which has a profiled sheet metal flat roof. Hillsfoot is described within the South Hill Avenue Conservation Area Study 2008 (SHACAS) as being impressive and marking the introduction to the CA from Wood End Road. Although the garage is to the front of Hillsfoot, its low height, together with the adjacent hedge and nearby trees providing screening, make it relatively unobtrusive in views into the CA and along Orley Farm Road. As a result therefore Hillsfoot itself contributes positively to the character and appearance of the CA and the existing garage makes a neutral contribution.
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5. The SHACAS notes that most dwellings also have a garage, designed in a similar style to the house in similar materials, and are intrinsic to the area. The garages also add variety to the streetscene, and complement the sense of openness by allowing visual interest between buildings. It advises that these structures should therefore be retained and should not be developed into office space or living accommodation.
6. I acknowledge that the existing garage is not original. Furthermore, the proposed alterations would create a structure that would be similar in style to the house and in similar materials. Nevertheless, the proposal would also involve a considerable increase in the height of the garage through the introduction of a first floor of accommodation. Together with the increased height and its proximity to the highway, the uncharacteristic length of the garage would create a large bulky mass of building. As a result, it would be a dominant structure in the streetscene that would unacceptably compete with Hillsfoot when viewed both from within the CA and from Wood End Road, where clear uninterrupted views are available into Orley Farm Road.
7. Consequently the openness of this key location at the entrance to the CA would be eroded. Moreover, the proposal would not be subservient to Hillsfoot and would detract from the cottage style character of the houses. In reaching this view I have taken account of the difference in land level between the garage and Hillsfoot. However, I observed that even with the difference in levels, the siting of the garage close to the highway means that it would still be prominent in views along the street.
8. I observed that there was tree cover in the corner of the site very close to the existing garage, annotated on the submitted plan 580/01 as two ash trees. Being close to the street and the entrance to the CA these large mature trees contribute substantially to the verdant character of the area. I note the appellant's assertion that the proposal would require no ground works and the trees would remain. Nevertheless, I observed that substantial branches from the trees overhang the existing garage and therefore would be in the way of the proposed extension to it. It is likely therefore that the trees would need to be at least considerably pruned to facilitate the works.
9. There is nothing before me to demonstrate the condition of the trees or the likely impact of the development on them. In the absence of such information and given the proximity of the trees and their canopies to the proposed garage I am unable to conclude that the leafy streetscape of the area and the entrance to the CA would not be eroded to an extent that would be harmful to the verdant character and appearance of the CA.
10. The proposed development would thus fail to preserve the character or appearance of the CA. Having had regard to paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and paragraph 017 of the Planning Practice Guidance I consider that the harm to the character and appearance of the CA would be less than substantial. This needs to be balanced against any public benefits the development may bring.
11. The construction of the extension would derive some economic benefits but this would be for a limited time and the contribution to the local economy is unlikely to be significant. The Framework notes that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and that great weight should be given to their

conservation. The economic benefit would not in this instance outweigh the resulting harm to the CA.

12. For the reasons above I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the South Hill Avenue Conservation Area. It would therefore be contrary to Policies 7.4B, 7.6B and 7.8 C/D of the London Plan 2016, Policies CS1.B and CS.1D of the Harrow Core Strategy 2012, Policies DM1, DM7 and DM22 of the Harrow Development Management Policies 2013 and guidance in the SHACAS and the Supplementary Planning Document Residential Design Guide 2010. When considered together the policies seek to ensure new development is of high quality design which preserves or enhances the historic significance of designated heritage assets, including CAs. Furthermore proposals for works to trees in CAs will only be permitted where the works do not risk compromising the amenity value or survival of the tree.

Other matters

13. The appellant has referred me to a number of other garages across the CA which he considers supports his proposal. I saw that there is a mix of attached and detached garages, the majority of which I was referred to are original to the house. They provide good examples of subservient small structures to the main dwellinghouse. Furthermore, most contained only one level of accommodation where detached from the house. This would be significantly different to the proposal in front of me now.
14. The appellant particularly refers to the garage at the Grange which I saw has a high pitched roof to match the host dwelling. However the garage is set to the side and rear of the house and consequently is not in such a prominent position as the garage the subject of this appeal. In any case I have determined the appeal proposals based on their own merits.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above, having had regard to all other matters raised, including the support of the South Hill Estates Resident Association and a local resident, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Zoe Raygen

INSPECTOR