

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 February 2017

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 14 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/D/16/3164511

47 Lime Grove, Ruislip HA4 8RL

- 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 Mrs Tanya Huehns against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 36542/APP/2016/2319, dated 15 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a first floor side and 2-storey rear extension, internal alterations and loft conversion including side and rear dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a mainly 2-storey detached house in a predominantly residential area wherein dwellings vary in scale, design and appearance. The roof of No 47 is tiled with hipped ends. At the side of the main house is an attached single storey garage. The site does not fall within a Conservation Area or an Area of Special Local Character. The appeal building is not listed.
 4. The proposal is to enlarge the existing dwelling with a full width single storey rear extension and a first floor side and rear addition. Extra living space would also be provided by converting the garage and within the roof space, which would be served by 3 new dormers and roof lights.
 5. From what I saw, the existing garage of No 47 establishes a substantial built form at ground floor level up to the shared side boundary with the adjacent property, which is 49 Lime Grove. The new side and rear extension would reduce the gap at first floor level between Nos 47 and 49 by introducing additional built form. Given the position of the existing garage, the finished building would not achieve the minimum 1 metre separation to the site's side boundary for the full height of the building as required by Policy BE22 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two - Saved UDP Policies (LP Part 2).
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6. Nevertheless, at first floor level a gap of about 1.3 metres would separate the new upper sidewall and the side boundary. The new side addition would also be set back from the front wall of the main house. As a result, sufficient space would be retained around the completed dwelling to preserve a clear visual break with No 49. This arrangement would ensure that the finished building would not appear cramped in terms of layout nor would it close a visually important gap between adjacent houses nor lead to a 'terracing effect' in the street scene. For these reasons, a conflict with LP Part 2 Policy BE22 would be insufficient in itself to withhold planning permission in this case.
7. However, the combination of proposed additions and alterations at roof level would radically change the appearance of No 47 and significantly impact on the local street scene to which it belongs. Specifically, the 3 new dormers and alterations to the roof form of the appeal dwelling would significantly increase the scale and bulk at a high level that would give the completed building an awkward top-heavy appearance. That would be most evident from the highway in front of the site. From this vantage point, each of the new side dormers would be a new and prominent feature given their elevated position. The new central ridgeline broadly parallel to the road would also visually accentuate the size and mass of the new roof when seen from Lime Grove. When taken together, the proposal would be on a scale where the simple form of the original building with its pyramidal shaped roof would be unduly compromised. Consequently, I am unable to share the appellant's opinion that the extension and dormers would not fundamentally alter the character and appearance of the host property.
8. The considerable scale and varied shape of the new roof would also markedly contrast with the clean lines, modest proportions and traditional shape of the roofs of properties along the same side of Lime Grove, close to the site. Consequently, the completed building would stand uncomfortably in its immediate context and be obtrusive in the street scene. The outcome would be material harm to the area's character and appearance. Although I saw an eclectic mix of houses and bungalows in the local area, it is with the properties in the immediate vicinity of the site that No 47, as proposed to be enlarged, would be visually 'read'.
9. In reaching this conclusion, I have taken into account the use of external materials to match the host building. I also note that the eaves level of the proposal would match that of the existing building. I have also had regard to the properties to which the appellant has referred as 'precedents' that include, amongst other things, side extensions and dormers. None of these examples directly compare to the proposal before me in terms of scale or in their relationship to the host building and those nearby. Consequently, there are few direct parallels to be drawn between these cases and the appeal scheme that support the appellant's case. Therefore I attach limited weight to them.
10. The appellant is critical of the Council's refusal because she considers that it is based on subjective judgement. Matters of character and appearance inevitably are. Nor do I accept that the Council has been overly prescriptive in the light of the policies and principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Framework clearly states that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through

unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to secure high quality design, to which the government attaches great importance. The Framework also makes clear that new development should respond to local character and add to the overall quality of the area. For the reasons given, the proposal would not adhere to these important principles.

11. On the main issue, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would materially harm the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. As such, it is contrary to Policy BE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies and LP Part 2 Policies BE13, BE15 and BE19. These policies aim to ensure that development harmonises with the original building and the existing street scene, and complements or improves the character of the area. These policies underpin the guidance within the Hillingdon Design and Accessibility Statement (HDAS) Supplementary Planning Document, with which the proposal would also conflict.
12. The proposal would make efficient use of the property in an accessible location and the additional accommodation would improve the living conditions of the appellant and enable them to stay and work in the local area. However, these matters do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR