
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DiP TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1st March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/D/17/3166653

3 Squirrels Heath Avenue, Romford RM2 6AD

- 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 Webb against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref P1698.16, dated 24 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is first floor rear extensions over previously added ground floor extensions. Removal of rear window and double doors, installation of bi-fold style glazed timber doors into enlarged opening.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area, including whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Gidea Park Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The site is located within the Gidea Park Conservation Area ('the CA'). The Council's Heritage Supplementary Planning Document 2011 ('SPD') summarises that its unique character is due to the efforts of Sir Herbert Raphael in the early 20th century to create a Garden Suburb with a variety of houses by well-known architects of the day, complemented by a smaller number in a modern style during the inter-war period. I observed on my visit that the dwellings here are typically in a spacious, landscaped setting, set back from tree-lined roads, and often with an individual design but in an Arts and Crafts style, with significant articulation, detailing and embellishment.
4. The Council refers to no. 3 Squirrels Heath Avenue ('No. 3') as a 1911 Exhibition House, designed by Gripper and Stevenson. Along with other Exhibition Houses, it is subject to an Article 4 direction to protect its character. The Gidea Park and District Civic Society has provided an extract from the 1911 Exhibition Catalogue showing No. 3's front elevation and layout. Although no. 3 has had single storey additions to its sides, that shows its original 'T' shaped plan form. From the evidence before me, I agree with the Council that the building is a heritage asset as defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework'). That has not been contested by the appellant.

5. The scheme would involve first floor extensions above no. 3's side additions, which would be flush with the dwelling's original flank walls. Those extensions would have a flat roof and parapet walls. Whilst the appellant maintains that the brick parapet perimeter walls would emphasize the building's original 'T' shaped roof configuration, in my view the extensions' contrasting roof form would not respect the original dwelling's sloping roofs. Notwithstanding the slight set-in of the proposed rear walls, by filling in most of the space at first floor level, much of the building's surviving 'T' shaped form would be lost. As the walls would extend above the host's eaves line, it would also create an awkward juncture between the original property and the extensions.
6. The introduction of a large opening with bi-fold doors cutting across part of the original rear elevation containing a window, and a door in the side addition, would also disrupt the fairly regular and symmetrical fenestration, some of which appears to be original; and would further obscure the original building's form and appearance.
7. Given the proposal's rearward siting it would have a limited impact on the streetscene. Nevertheless, given their position and height, the extensions could be seen from Squirrels Heath Avenue through the gaps between no. 3 and its neighbours. In those views the scheme's elevated rectilinear mass would contrast unfavourably with the host's sloping roofs and its more articulated design. Additionally, notwithstanding landscaping, the scheme would be visible from the rear gardens and rear elevations of some surrounding properties.
8. Although elements of no. 3's existing ground floor side additions are rather unsympathetic, they have a hipped roof form, are visually clearly subordinate to the host property and do not significantly disrupt its appearance above ground floor level. Their presence does not therefore justify the additional harm that this scheme would cause.
9. For the above reasons the character and appearance of no. 3 would be harmed, as would its significance as a heritage asset. Having paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas, I conclude that the scheme would fail that statutory test. It would conflict with policies DC61 and DC68 of the Havering Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD 2008 which require, in general terms, that development maintains the character and appearance of the area, responds to locally distinctive building forms; and, in the case of conservation areas, that the character or appearance of the area is preserved or enhanced. It would also fail to accord with the SPD's advice that extensions in conservation areas should be complementary in terms of design and detailing.
10. In accordance with paragraph 132 of the Framework I have given great weight to the conservation of the CA. Although, applying paragraph 134, the harm caused to it would be less than substantial, I have not been directed to any significant public benefits, nor have I identified any myself. Consequently, the scheme would also conflict with the Framework, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR