
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 May 2017

by Alex Hutson MATP CMLI MArborA

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

Decision date: 30 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/W/17/3169738
229 Alexandra Avenue, Harrow HA2 9DL

- 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 P Khakharia against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/5574/16, dated 29 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is "Full planning permission is sought for two-storey side extension, single storey rear extension, roof level rear dormers and general fenestration alterations and sub division of existing house into 2 semi detached dwellings and new dropped kerb".
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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 area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is one of a row of four, two storey, detached dwellings located along a separate service road which runs parallel to Alexandra Avenue. Whilst the area has a mixed character, including some flatted development and some commercial uses, these four dwellings have a similar appearance and share a strong level of uniformity which contributes positively to their group value and local distinctiveness. Though a hedge runs between the service road and the main road, the group of dwellings are visible from a number of vantage points along Alexandra Avenue.
 4. The proposal seeks to erect a two storey side extension, a single storey rear extension and two rear dormers. The resultant building would be subdivided to create a pair of semi-detached dwellings with separate front entrances and off-street parking. There would be some alterations to the fenestration arrangement at the front and rear.
 5. I acknowledge that the side extension would be constructed from materials to match the existing dwelling and that a chimney would be reinstated. Furthermore, that a gap would be maintained between the proposal and both the adjacent block of flats and adjacent detached dwelling. I also note the
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appellant's argument that there are limited views of the rear of the appeal property and as such, the rear dormers and rear extension would not be particularly visible from the wider public realm. In addition, I recognise that architectural styles should not be imposed or innovation stifled.

6. Nevertheless, the side extension would continue the ridgeline of the appeal property and would not be set back from the front façade. Rather, it would step forward to create a two story bay window element. As such, the side extension would result in a large and prominent addition to the appeal property which would not be subservient to the overall scale and appearance of the original building or that of others dwellings within the group. Moreover, the inclusion of two separate front entrances and off-road parking would, in my opinion, clearly give the impression of a pair of semi-detached dwellings. This would appear at odds with and would considerably detract from the distinctiveness, uniformity and group value of the four detached dwellings.
7. In respect of the rear dormers, they would not fully comply with the guidance of the Harrow Council Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2010 (SPD) which advises a set-in distance of at least 500mm from the shared boundary with an attached house. The SPD has been formally adopted by the Council and I therefore afford it considerable weight. The modest separation distance between the rear dormers and their combined width would fail to achieve adequate visual containment within the rear roofslope. Whilst this might not be apparent from along Alexandra Avenue, I observed that glimpsed views towards the rear roofslope could be obtained from public vantage points along Minehead Road.
8. As such, the proposal would subsume the character of the appeal property and would fail to respect its scale, massing and appearance and the scale, massing and appearance of the group of dwellings as a whole. As such, it would represent an incongruous form of development which would give rise to significant harm to the character and appearance of the streetscene and area. My view on this is notwithstanding that the appeal property or the group of dwellings if forms part of are not subject to any specific heritage designations.
9. The appellant suggests he could add a wider rear dormer and a more subservient side extension to the appeal property which would reflect the general scale of the proposal. However, there are no such plans before me to allow me to make any informed comparisons. Moreover, I am required to consider the proposal on its own merits.
10. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy DM 1- Achieving a High Standard of Development, of the Harrow Council Development Management Policies 2013; Policy CS1B- Overarching Policy, of the Harrow Core Strategy 2012; and Policies 7.4B- Local Character and 7.6B- Architecture, of the London Plan- the Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations Since 2011 March 2016. These policies require, amongst other things, development to be of a high quality design that reflects local character, to respond positively to local context and distinctiveness, to respect the pattern of development and for extensions to respect their host buildings.
11. The proposal would also conflict with the guidance of the SPD which advises that side extensions should be subordinate to their host dwellings and that rear dormers should be set-in by an appropriate margin from the shared boundary with an attached house.

Other matters

12. I acknowledge that the proposal would occupy a location with a good level of access to local services and facilities for any future occupiers. It would make a contribution, albeit a limited one, to housing supply in the Borough and would provide a good standard of accommodation. I acknowledge that it would integrate high levels of energy and water efficiency. I also note the appellant's argument that it would make more efficient use of previously developed land. However, these matters, individually or cumulatively, would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters, including highway safety, pavement obstruction, noise, overlooking, sunlight, flood risk and foul water drainage, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alex Hutson

INSPECTOR