
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2017

by Geoff Underwood BA(Hons) PGDip(Urb Cons) MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 27 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/W/17/3171702

2 and 4 Oakmead Gardens, Edgware HA8 9RW

- 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 Broadoak Estates Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 16/7848/HSE, dated 9 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is single storey front; two storey side and rear extensions to 2 & 4 Oakmead Gardens.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect the development would have on the character and appearance of the host properties and the area.

Reasons

3. The development relates to a pair of semi-detached houses which at the front have a largely symmetrical appearance, although No 2 has a porch and extensions to the side and rear which are set back from the front. The pair share a similar appearance with many other houses on Oakmead Gardens and those nearby on Gibbs Green. In the vicinity of the appeal site, these streets are predominantly characterised by hipped roofed, semi-detached dwellings.
 4. The proposal would extend both properties to the side, replacing the hipped roof with gables, and add a single storey 'wrap-around' extension to the front and sides. This would adjoin flat roofed, two storey extensions extending across much of the rear of the properties. A pair of large, flat roof dormer extensions in the rear roof slope would be positioned above those rear extensions. The existing canted bay windows to the front would be replaced by, or altered to, ones with a rectangular plan.
 5. The result of the side extensions would render the host buildings considerably more conspicuous, occupying most of the width of the combined plots. As a pair they would appear with a markedly more extensive combined front elevation at first floor and roof level than other pairs of properties in the vicinity. This effect would be exaggerated by the creation of a significantly longer ridge and replacement of the hipped roofs by gabled ends. The gabled roofs, and to a lesser degree the altered bay windows, would appear in marked
-

contrast to the predominant character and appearance of surrounding properties which exists at the front.

6. Although not facing the street, the alterations to the rear would nevertheless be conspicuous across the rear gardens of properties on Gibbs Green from both Oakmead Gardens and, over a greater distance, Northolm. The combined effect of the large, flat roofed rear extensions with large flat roof dormers above would appear bulky and incongruous compared with the pitched roof host buildings, even though they would not be apparent when looking at them head on from the front. Whilst the dormers and the two storey extensions would be set back from the extended flank elevations, this would be by a limited amount and not sufficient to render them less prominent or appear substantially subservient to the host buildings.
7. The combined and cumulative effect of the proposed extensions would be bulky and incongruous considered in respect of the host buildings and the wider streetscene. Considered together, the extensions would not appear subservient to the host buildings.
8. There is an existing two storey, flat roofed extension to No 2, which is offset from the side and rear. This appears incongruous as a result of its bulky design and appearance. The proposal would result in its replacement or incorporation. However, whilst this would remove this existing extension's awkward and clumsy appearance from the front, a more extensive flat roofed mass would extend across the rear elevations of the pair.
9. Notwithstanding that the extensions would result in No 4 being slightly wider than No 2, the proposal would make the pair largely more uniform in appearance by removing the unbalancing effect of the existing rear extension and matching the pair's built form and detailing. However, such an advantage would be limited considered with the overall effect of the extensions and would not be a benefit that could only be gained as a result of the proposed configuration.
10. The combined effect of the proposals would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host properties and the wider area. This would be contrary to Core Strategy¹ Policy CS5 and Development Management² Policy DM01 which require that development preserves, enhances and respects local context and character, and respects the appearance, scale, mass, height and pattern of surrounding buildings. Whilst more strategic in its scope, the proposal would also fail to accord with the high design standards expected by Core Strategy Policy CS1.
11. Although the proposals would avoid unbalancing the pair if executed together, the extensions would not follow the Council's design guidance³ which supports these policies in a number of respects. In particular, this would be as a result of the extensions' lack of subservience to the original buildings and their features. The development would not accord with the national policy⁴ requirements that development is of high quality which responds to local character.

¹ Barnet's Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document, 2012.

² Barnet's Local Plan (Development Management Policies) Development Plan Document, 2012.

³ Local Plan Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guidance, 2013.

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, paragraphs 17, 58 and 64.

Other Matters

12. The appellants consider that the rear dormers would benefit from permitted development rights. However, even if they are correct in their interpretation of the permitted development position, the dormers are only one element of the proposal and this would not avoid the adverse effects of the flat roofed rear extensions below.
13. Although the appellants refer to extensions at No 4 which have the benefit of planning permission, the drawings for that scheme show the two storey side extension set back from the front, with a lower ridge which reflects the hipped arrangement of the host building. The rear extension, although flat roofed, would be single storey. That scheme is therefore materially different to the proposal before me and does not lead me to consider that it would be acceptable in light of that permission.
14. The appellants have pointed out the existence of other flat roof rear extensions to rear of properties on Oakmead Gardens shown on an aerial photograph. Notwithstanding that I do not have any information about their design or appearance, nor the circumstances which led to their construction, their location is materially different to that of the appeal properties whose situation at the end of the row of buildings on Oakmead Gardens means the rear and flank elevations, particularly those of No 2, are considerably more apparent in the wider streetscene. Furthermore, although undated, the aerial photograph also shows that, at that time, large gable and rear dormer extensions are very much in the minority on properties in the vicinity of the appeal site.
15. Interested parties commenting on the planning application and the appeal refer to the properties having been converted to flats. The appellants advise that the site is currently in use as a house in multiple occupation and that as the proposal would result in two separate dwellings this would address any such concerns. Irrespective of the lawfulness of the current arrangements, which is not a matter for me to determine, any issues in this respect could not only be addressed by way of the extensions proposed.
16. The appellants consider that there would be no adverse effects on neighbours' living conditions, however an absence of harm in this respect does not amount to a positive consideration in favour of the appeal. These other matters do not, therefore, lead me to consider that the proposal would be otherwise acceptable.

Conclusion

17. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host properties and the area, contrary to the development plan, Council guidance and national policy. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Geoff Underwood

INSPECTOR