
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 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: 31 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/W/17/3172820
Station Road, Gidea Park

- 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 Saleem against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref P1600.16, dated 4 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 14 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a new one-and-a-half storey office building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appellant has submitted amended plans in support of his appeal. The differences between these and those on which the Council made its decision are minor, primarily relating to the change in fenestration in the rear elevation as well as illustrating a recently built adjoining building. As such, I do not consider that the interests of any parties will have been prejudiced by taking these plans into account and I have considered the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect the development would have on the character and appearance of the area including that of the Gidea Park Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a truncated wedge shape bounded by Station Road to the south and a footpath running adjacent to a railway line to the north west. It is undeveloped with the exception of two large advertisement hoardings situated along the rear of the site. Notwithstanding the appellant's description, the proposed development would consist of a two storey building, with an open sided undercroft parking area at one end at ground floor level. The front part of the first floor would be set within a mono-pitch roof punctuated by dormers and would project forward of the ground floor element.
5. The site lies immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area. This covers an extensive area and predominantly comprises buildings from the early decades of the C20 in a garden suburb layout and includes commercial areas as well as

the station which lies to the west of the site. The station building and the small kiosk like buildings on either side of it make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historic character of the Area. The Character Appraisal¹ advises that station is contemporary with the first of two housing exhibitions the buildings of which are a key component of the Area's special interest. Together these contribute to a distinctive layout and design of buildings which gives the Area much of its special character and appearance, and hence its significance.

6. Although not in the Conservation Area itself the site forms part of the setting in which the Area is experienced. Whilst it is currently overgrown the site has, on balance, a neutral and therefore preserving effect on the significance of the Conservation Area. The proposal would be both clearly visible from within the Conservation Area and would be prominent in views into the Area along Station Road.
7. Unlike the semi-detached dwellings on either side of Station Road opposite and to the east of the site, the proposed building would extend up to the site's boundary to the front at first floor level and be only slightly set back from it below. This would give rise to a cramped appearance within the site, in harmful contrast to its surroundings. These include a recently constructed detached building immediately to the east of the site which continues the curved set back from the street created by properties on Station Road. This feature would be disrupted and the proposal's effect would be exaggerated when viewed from the east due to the extent of the gable supported on a column which would project forward of that adjoining building and result in an unduly prominent and intrusive structure in the streetscene.
8. The overhanging first floor and mono-pitch roof with inserted dormers would result in an unconventional design which would stand in contrast to the surrounding buildings. Notwithstanding the challenges the site's constrained shape would give rise to, the first floor overhang and large void created by the undercroft parking area would give rise to a building which would appear awkward, particularly in how it would occupy the narrower parts of the site, compared to the existing buildings on either side of Station Road.
9. The height of the recently built adjoining building means that the overall height of the proposal would appear as slight step down in overall building height in the streetscape towards lower buildings closer to the station to the west. This transition would avoid some of the harm identified by Inspectors considering previous appeals² when that adjoining site was occupied by a modest single storey building. Nevertheless, any mitigating effects this may have would be largely negated by its scale, massing, design and prominent forward position on the site. The appellant points out that there is variety in the appearance of buildings in the area. However, this wider townscape is not so varied, particularly opposite and to the east along Station Road, that it would reduce the effects of the proposed building within its immediate built context.
10. These effects would also result in an incongruous effect on the setting of the Conservation Area, in particular that part characterised by the group of buildings including the station. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) recognises that the significance of heritage assets can be harmed

¹ London Borough of Havering - Gidea Park Conservation Area, Character Appraisal and Management Proposals.

² APP/B5480/A/11/2166459, APP/B5480/A/08/2078640 and APP/B5480/A/03/1107731.

through development within its setting and I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the Conservation Area's special character and appearance.

11. The proposal would harm this special character and appearance and therefore the significance of the heritage asset as a result of the detrimental effect on its setting. As such the proposal would be contrary to Core Strategy³ Policies DC61 and DC68 which, amongst other criteria, require development to maintain (or in the case of Conservation Areas preserve), enhance or improve the character and appearance of the local area.
12. However, this harm to the Conservation Area's significance would be less than substantial as a result of it affecting part of its setting and being limited in the context of the whole Conservation Area. These are circumstances where the Framework requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
13. The development would deliver public benefits by way of the redevelopment of a vacant site (including the removal of existing hoardings) and the provision of office accommodation which would help the local economy and is generally supported by development plan policies. However, these benefits would be limited in scale and there is no reason to suggest that they could only be generated by a scheme of the proposed design and configuration. I have given considerable importance and weight to the harm to the significance of the heritage asset and consequently these benefits would not outweigh that harm.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, including the significance of the Conservation Area, contrary to the development plan and the Framework. The Appeal is therefore dismissed.

Geoff Underwood

INSPECTOR

³ Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document, 2008.