
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 August 2017

by Jonathan Hockley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 29th August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/17/3172991
188 Harefield Road, Uxbridge UB8 1PS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Dhanoa against the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 72018/APP/2016/4222, is dated 21 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is to demolish the existing house and build a two storey building with rooms in the roof to provide four x 1 bedroom flats and three x 2 bedrooms flats.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission to demolish the existing house and build a two storey building with rooms in the roof to provide four x 1 bedroom flats and three x 2 bedrooms flats is refused.

Preliminary Matters and Main Issues

2. The appeal was made against the failure of the Local Planning Authority to give notice of their decision on the application within the statutory period. Subsequent to the making of the appeal the Council confirmed that they would have refused the application. I have treated the Council's Officer Report as the decision the Local Planning Authority would have made, had they been empowered to do so.
3. The report states that the Council would have refused the application on three grounds which can be summarised as the effect of the scheme on the surrounding area and on matters of highway safety. Based on all that I have seen and read I have no reason to disagree with this analysis of the key issues.
4. Subsequently I consider the main issues in this case to be: (a) the effect of the proposed development, including its car parking provision, on the character and appearance of the area, and (b) the effect of the proposal on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. Harefield Road lies on the northern fringes of Uxbridge, and is a reasonably busy road linking the town centre area towards the A40 dual carriageway. In the vicinity of the appeal site, the road is characterised by large detached

properties set back within their plots, with parking and gardens to front. There is a mix of gable and hipped roofs in the area, and many of the 2 storey properties also have rooms in the roof. The houses have a wide variety of designs.

6. No 188 Harefield Road is a 2 storey property, designed in 3 bays with the central gabled bay projecting. The building, in common with its neighbour to the west at No 186 Harefield Road, is constructed in buff brick with red brick detailing. A single storey flat roof garage is attached on the western side of the building. Although many of the buildings in the area have been extended over time, the area retains a spacious feel, helped in part by the set back nature of the properties and the opportunity that this provides for mature landscaping between the houses and the road, but also by the gaps which are largely retained between the properties. Where such gaps are narrow, these are largely filled, with one or two exceptions, by single storey extensions or protrusions.
7. The road in front of no 188 has a gentle curve, and the properties fronting the road on the southern side, including Nos 186, 188 and 190 Harefield Road, but also No 1 Hillman Close, sited gable on to the primary road, are sited in a similarly gently curving manner, with the front building lines of the properties mirroring the road curve.
8. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing house and construct a new building to house 7 flats. The scheme has been designed to appear as a large residential house, with a five bay façade with the left 2 bays in a projecting gable. The property would be two storeys high with an attic housing a penthouse flat. Due to the number of flats proposed within the building, the depth of the property would be substantial, with a front building line set back slightly from the front building line of No 190 to the east and substantially forward of No 186 to the west. The rear building line would extend beyond the rear line of No 186.
9. The property would be largely 2 storeys across its entire width, with only a small single storey protrusion on the west side for bin storage. The sides of the property would be set close to the boundaries of the plot with a 1m gap between the eastern elevation and the boundary with No 190 and a narrowing gap on the western side between the house and boundary with No 186, stated by the Council to be some 1.07m at the rear corner of the proposal.
10. Such width and mass of building would be out of character with the surrounding area, where gaps, although not always present at ground floor level, are usually present at first floor level and above between neighbouring properties. Such an effect would be particularly noticeable when travelling east along Harefield Road. At present there is a clear gap between Nos 188 and 186, with a substantial area of daylight visible above the flat roof garages between the rear elevation of No 188 and the façade of no 186. The depth and overall mass of the proposal would completely alter this view, appearing as a solid block of development and significantly altering the spacious character and appearance of the area.
11. I note that the design of the proposal has been simplified since an earlier iteration, with the roof design and height both altering. While this reduction in ridge height would assist in helping the proposal more match its neighbours in views from directly in front, the height of the building on the side elevations

- and depth of the scheme, particularly on its western elevation would have a discordant effect on the local street scene.
12. 7 car parking spaces are proposed for the front of the property, with 4 on the east side and 3 on the west side, with an access sited roughly in the middle of the plot. I agree that this number of spaces is necessary given the number of flats proposed at the site and the size of the flats. At the time of my visit the access to the property was on the west hand side of the plot, and the front of the site had been cleared of vegetation. Plans show a proposed area of soft landscaping to both boundaries, with a very narrow area for planting along the front of the plot and a small triangle between 2 of the spaces on the east side. They indicate that hardstanding would cover 66.5% of the total front area.
 13. 7 car parking spaces is a significant number and, whilst noting the space available for landscaping in totality, I am not convinced that this space would be sufficient to soften and screen the impact of this amount of car parking. Of particular concern in this regard is the proximity of the northern most parking spaces to the footpath edge. The red line for the site edge is shown as very close to the edge of these spaces, and I am not convinced that the shown landscaping could adequately screen such spaces. The provision of a large block of 7 spaces in such visibility from the street scene would add to the overall impression of the overdevelopment of the site when viewed in conjunction with the mass of the proposed building.
 14. I note that some nearby properties have substantial areas of hardstanding at the front of their houses. No 186 in particular has a walled area of hardstanding in front of the property. However, I do not consider such a design to be sympathetic to the street scene and does not constitute either an example to follow. Properties to the east of the appeal site typically have more substantial planting effectively screening their parking areas.
 15. The appellant considers that the proposal would comply with the Borough's Supplementary Planning Document¹ (the SPD), which states that redevelopment of large plots for individual dwellings into flats can be possible. However, the SPD notes that such redevelopment is subject to careful and sensitive design. For the reasons given above, I do not consider that the proposal would comply with this guidance.
 16. I therefore conclude that the proposed development including its car parking provision would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal would be contrary to policies BE1 of the Local Plan Part 1² and policies BE13, BE19, and BE38 of the Local Plan Part 2³. When taken together these policies state that all development is required to improve and maintain the quality of the built environment, making a positive contribution in terms of scale and form. Development will not be permitted if the appearance fails to harmonise with the existing street scene and will be expected to provide new planting and landscaping wherever it is appropriate.

¹ Hillingdon Design and Accessibility Statement (HDAS) Supplementary Planning Document Residential Layouts, 2006.

² A Vision for 2026, Local Plan:Part 1Strategic Policies, November 2012.

³ London Borough of Hillingdon Unitary Development Plan (adopted 1998) Saved Policies 2007

Highway Safety

17. The width of the proposed access crossover has been reduced from a previous proposal. The Council raise concerns over the lack of shown pedestrian visibility splays and vehicle sightlines, and local residents raise issues due to the nature of the curve in the road.
18. At my visit I noted that visibility towards the east from the proposed site access was good, but towards the west and the bend less so. However, the proposal would move the access to roughly the middle of the site. This would aid in visibility terms, moving the access slightly further away from the bend in the road. I also note that the Council's Highway Officer has no objections to the location of the proposed access or stated concerns over actual visibility splays, more on the details shown on the plans and treatment of crossover radii. Such details could be reasonably conditioned and it should be entirely possible for a driver using due care and attention to safely enter or leave the site without causing harm to pedestrians.
19. I therefore consider that with the imposition of suitable conditions, the proposal would not have an adverse effect on highway safety. In this context the proposal would comply with policy AM7 of the Local Plan Part 2, which states that the Local Planning Authority will not grant permission for developments whose traffic generation is likely to prejudice the free flow of traffic or conditions of general highway or pedestrian safety.

Other Matters

20. I note the appellant's comments regarding the conduct of the Council during the planning application and their difficulties in making contact with relevant officers during this time. Complaints regarding the Council's conduct should be made in the first instance through their own complaints procedure. I have dealt with the appeal on its own merits.
21. The proposal would increase housing supply in the area, also providing benefits in terms of housing choice. The appellant notes that such benefits would be in accordance with the London Plan⁴. However, I do not consider that such benefits would outweigh the adverse effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. In coming to this view I also note that the scheme would be contrary to policy 3.5 of the London Plan, which states that housing developments should be of the highest quality in relation to their context and the wider environment.

Conclusion

22. Whilst I have found that the scheme would not harm highway safety, this does not outweigh my concerns over the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, for the reasons given above, and considering all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed and planning permission refused.

Jon Hockley INSPECTOR

⁴ The London Plan, Mayor of London, March 2016