

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2019

by David Fitzsimon MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd March 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/18/3214137

2a Hillcroft Avenue, Purley CR8 3DG

- 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 Edwin Godinho against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 18/00974/FUL, dated 27 March 2018, was refused by notice dated 22 August 2018.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of a bungalow and detached double garage and the construction of a new single dwelling house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Hillcroft Avenue street scene.

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to a detached 1970s style bungalow which sits in a recessed position on its plot with a flat roofed garage in front of it. It is located within a residential area with the nearby dwellings set within spacious plots.
 4. Hillcroft Avenue sits within the Woodcote Estate Local Area of Special Character (LASC). I have not been made aware of any Supplementary Planning Guidance which identifies the particular characteristics of the designated area. However, from my site visit I noted that the dwellings within it are largely of conventional appearance and finished in traditional materials, with a heavy 'Arts and Craft' influence and the majority appear to have been built in the inter-war period. Some anomalies do exist, but they are very much the exception rather than the rule.
 5. The Council raises no objection to the principle of demolishing and replacing the existing dwelling, which is of limited architectural merit. However, the Council does raise concerns about the overall design and form of the proposed dwelling. The ground floor would be much larger than the first floor. As a result, it would have large decked areas to the front and rear at first floor level, along with flat roof sections running along each side which would be planted. This
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arrangement would give the ground floor of the proposed dwelling a box like form. The first floor and loft area would be noticeably shallower and narrower, with a gable facing the highway. Its fenestration would not relate well to that of the ground floor, it would have a central section of glazing running along the ridge in an asymmetrical fashion and it would have an exaggerated chalet style overhanging roof.

6. These features are not characteristic of the overwhelming majority of dwellings found within the local area. Whilst I see no reason why an appropriately designed contemporary dwelling could not sit comfortably on this plot, the design features that I have described would result in a dwelling with a confused and imbalanced appearance.
7. Even accounting for the fact that the external finishing materials seek to echo the 1930s half timber aesthetics which are found locally, the effect would be a stark contrast to the traditional and well proportioned dwellings found nearby. This visual harm would be exacerbated by the fact that the dwelling would be much larger than the existing bungalow, it would sit further forward on the plot and consequently, it would be readily visible from the public domain.
8. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the Hillcroft Avenue street scene. In such terms, it conflicts with policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan and policies SP4.1 and SP4.2 and DM10 of the adopted Croydon Local Plan, which all promote high quality development that responds well to local character.

Other considerations

9. I understand that the design of the dwelling, with a much larger ground floor area than first floor area, is heavily influenced by a need to accommodate an elderly wheelchair bound relative and a home office. Whilst I have some sympathy with these requirements, no compelling evidence has been advanced to persuade me that they could not be met in a more visually acceptable way.
10. I also note that the proposed dwelling would incorporate a range of energy efficient technology. However, I see no reason why a more appropriately designed house could not do the same. I also accept that adequate private amenity space and off-street parking would be provided, that measures could be put in place to ensure the dwelling did not unacceptably harm the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings and that appropriate external lighting and landscaping schemes could be implemented. However, these are neutral factors in the planning balance.

Overall Conclusion

11. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the Hillcroft Avenue street scene, contrary to the development plan policies outlined above. The arguments advanced by the appellant in favour of the scheme do not outweigh this harm and policy conflict therefore the appeal does not succeed.

David Fitzsimon

INSPECTOR