
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 February 2020

by David Murray BA (Hons) DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/20/3245311
West Hill Close, West Hill, Harrow, HA2 0JQ.

- 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 V Palasuntheram against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/3897/19, dated 3 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of pitched roof over extension and raising of walls over same and erection of a new first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area which forms part of the Roxeth Hill Conservation Area.

Reasons

Background

3. The appeal site contains a large detached property which sits in its own grounds on the edge of Harrow on the Hill. The house is locally listed and lies within the Roxeth Hill Conservation Area.
4. The main house has a two storey extension to the north followed by a single storey 'L' shaped 'wing' with extensive glazing facing the forecourt/parking area of the property and a glazed lantern at the eastern end of the roof. It is proposed to build a first floor over part of this wing in a modern architectural form with glazing as the main feature on the front elevation.
5. I note that within the planning history of the site permission was granted in 2008 under ref. P/1228/08DFU for a two storey extension with a more traditional form set down below the eaves of the main roof.

Effect on character and appearance

6. The conservation area appraisal describes West Hill as a quiet lane with an enclosed and secluded feel with a sense of enclosure as buildings are densely packed close to the pavement. The buildings are described as having a grand yet unobtrusive design often with classical detail.

7. I noted at my site visit that the appeal site house has an elegant and mostly symmetrical classical form. However, the boundary wall to the garden and the solid entrance gates along the narrow lane mean that only the main upper part of the house is visible from the public realm. The 'L' shape extension referred to above is visually contained by the enclosure and therefore this relatively modern addition is hardly seen outside of the site.
8. I understand the appellant's architect's aim of creating a visually contrasting addition to the property, with the existing two storey extension modified to form a visual transition between the old and new section. The intention is to produce both an exterior and interior with a contemporary theme. In principle such a design solution can be an appropriate way of adding to a heritage asset. However, in this case I am concerned that visually there would be an awkward relationship between the extent of sliding doors, the rendered panel and the protruding exterior balcony proposed. In my view the scale of the additional building bulk at first floor, the array of materials and the degree of fenestration would not result in a physical form that would be visually compatible or ancillary to the main house despite its set back from the front elevation.
9. Moreover, this visual impact would not be contained within the environs of the property. I noted at my visit that the proposed extension would be seen above the boundary wall when approaching from the north along West Hill and from much of the lane adjoining the property. The proposed extension would be visually prominent and would be seen to add with and dominate the appearance of the main house. I also agree with the Council's Conservation Officer that when the proposed new bedroom is lit, at night there would be a prominent and imposing glow from the scale of fenestration.
10. I conclude that the scale and form of first floor extension would not complement the architectural form of the host house but would harm the setting of this locally listed heritage asset. Further, the work would be conspicuous and intrusive outside of the site and would harm the character and the appearance of the conservation area and would not preserve or enhance it. I find that the proposal would therefore conflict with the provisions of policies 7.4B, 7.6B and 7.8 of the London Plan; Core Policy CS1B of the Council's Core Strategy; and Policies DM1 and DM7 of the Harrow Development Management Policies Local Plan
11. In terms of the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), I find that the proposal would result in 'less than substantial harm to the heritage asset' as set out in paragraph 196, however, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would give rise to public benefits other than the general and limited improvement of the housing stock.

Planning balance

12. On the main issue I have found that the proposed first floor addition would harm and not complement the character and appearance of the host property and would not preserve or enhance these aspects of the conservation area. This leads to a conflict with the stated policies of the development plan and national guidance.
13. This harm amounts to a significant adverse effect but this has to be balanced with other considerations. I have taken account of the scheme permitted in

2008 but the current proposal is materially different to this and I have to consider it on its individual merits.

14. The NPPF makes clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of the heritage assets of the locally listed host building and the conservation area. The other factors raised, particularly over the design quality and impact of the scheme, do not outweigh the conclusion I have reached on the main issue and therefore the proposal should not be permitted.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Murray

INSPECTOR