



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by J M Tweddle BSc(Hons) MSc(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/19/3241302

51 Sweetcroft Lane, Uxbridge UB10 9LE

- 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 Kavanagh against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 33932/APP/2018/3224, dated 5 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 16 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of 4 No. 4 bedrooms three storey detached houses.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development set out in the heading above is taken from the application form. However, from the plans and drawings before me, it is clear that the proposal amounts to the erection of four two-storey detached dwellings and the formation of access. I have, therefore, dealt with the appeal on this basis.
3. The London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies was adopted by the Council on 16 January 2020. This suite of policies now forms part of the statutory development plan for the borough and replaces the 2012 saved Unitary Development Plan policies. As a result of the adoption of the Local Plan document, the Council have withdrawn their Residential Layouts Supplementary Planning Document. Consequently, I have had regard to the newly adopted policies in my decision and the parties have been provided with an opportunity to comment.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is currently occupied by a large two-storey detached dwelling with substantial front and rear gardens. Being located to the rear of 53 Sweetcroft Lane, it is a form of tandem development which is prevalent along this part of Sweetcroft Lane. The site is located within the Hillingdon Court Park

Area of Special Local Character (ASLC), a non-designated heritage asset, which is broadly characterised by large properties of varying designs set within generously sized gardens interspersed by mature trees, which provides a spacious and leafy suburban feel to the area.

6. The proposal would see the adjacent cul-de-sac along Portman Gardens extended into the site to provide four detached properties, two on each side of the street. Although properties along Portman Gardens have a more compact arrangement than those in Sweetcroft Lane, the proposed dwellings would have markedly narrower frontages and smaller gaps to side boundaries when compared with existing properties here. As a result, the dwellings would have an overly cramped appearance and as such, they would fail to fully integrate with the established pattern and density of development found in the surrounding area.
7. Furthermore, the dwellings proposed in plots 3 and 4 would sit significantly forward of the neighbouring two-storey front elevation of 26 Portman Gardens. This would result in a poor layout and relationship with the adjacent built form and would accentuate the cramped appearance of the dwellings within the street. As a consequence, the development would be overly prominent and harmfully erode the spacious characteristics of the surrounding area.
8. Notwithstanding the fact that some of the trees within the appeal site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), I accept that tree losses would be limited and would only include trees of moderate to low quality, providing little amenity value. Replacement trees are also proposed to mitigate these losses. Similarly, I do not consider that an excessive amount of garden area would be lost. That said, these matters do not overcome the harm I have found due to the bulky and cramped appearance of the dwellings and the awkward relationship they would have with No 26 and the remainder of the street.
9. Consequently, I have found that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. This is contrary to Policies BE1 and HE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One – Strategic Policies (2012), Policies DMHB 1, DMHB 5 and DMHB 11 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020), and Policies 3.5, 7.1 and 7.4 of the London Plan (2016). It would also be in conflict with the Mayor of London's adopted Housing Standards (March 2016). Taken together, these policies seek to protect heritage assets, including Areas of Special Local Character, and requires new housing development to achieve high standards of design that reflect and contribute to the character of the area.
10. In this regard the development would also conflict with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework which, amongst other things, seek to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment.
11. The Council also cite conflict with Policy DMHB 14 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020) which seeks to retain or enhance existing landscaping and trees of merit. However, given my findings above, in relation to the trees, I do not find conflict with this policy.

Other Matters

12. I accept that there would be no harm to the living conditions of neighbouring residents or future occupiers of the development, and the dwellings would reflect some design features found along the street. However, these are neutral factors in my determination.
13. I note the appellant's arguments that the development would be an efficient use of land, offering economic benefits during construction and following occupation. Furthermore, it would provide four family sized homes located with access to local services and amenities. Some limited environmental benefits would also be accrued through improved tree management and the replacement of poor quality trees and it is suggested that the properties would embrace principles of moving towards a low carbon economy. I also acknowledge the contribution that small and medium housing sites can make to meeting the housing requirements of an area. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have found and do not, therefore, lead me away from my conclusion on the main issue.
14. It is also suggested that the development has the potential to open up the neighbouring site for development, but there is no firm evidence of such a development coming forward before me so this is of little weight in my consideration of the appeal.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons I have set out, the appeal is dismissed.

Jeff Tweddle

INSPECTOR