
Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 22 January 2020

By Edward Cousins BA, BL, LLM, Barrister

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/19/3238939

118 High Street, Northwood, HA6 1BJ

- 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 Goldenacre Estates Ltd against the decision of London Borough of Hillingdon to grant planning consent.
 - The application Ref 31419/APP/2019/1794, dated 29 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 July 2019.
 - The development proposed (the proposed development) is for the demolition of the existing ground floor extension and replacement with new rear extension on the same plan footprint, and development of a new independent entrance to entrance to existing first floor residential unit.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Preliminary matters

3. At the Site Visit Mr Michael Rushe, of ICE Architects Ltd, attended on behalf of the Appellant. Mr Rushe indicated that there was the potential to amend the scheme in order to address concerns relating to the insertion of windows on the boundary. However, as no such plans have been submitted I have determined the appeal based on the plans that the Council made in reaching its decision.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The proposed development is for the demolition of an existing extension to the rear of 118 High Road, and its replacement with a single storey rear extension. This would involve the demolition of the existing boundary wall.

5. As part of the scheme there is a proposal to introduce floor-to-ceiling windows into the boundary wall.
6. At present there are two openings for access by pedestrians formed in the boundary wall. There are no windows. The first opening is situated immediately at the rear of host property where it abuts the existing extension and provides secondary access thereto and to the residential unit above. The second opening provides access to the rear of the existing extension and other neighbouring properties through a narrow external path.
7. The proposed development envisages that over and above the introduction of the windows into the boundary wall there should also be two openings in place of the single opening that exists at present situated immediately at the rear of host property where it abuts the existing extension. The purpose of this is to create separate entrances for access. The first opening is to provide a dedicated entrance to the residential unit above the host property, together with access to a new bin store. The second opening is to provide a secondary entrance to the proposed development and a means of escape.
8. The appellant has provided examples in support of its case where the introduction of windows would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the streetscene. I appreciate that the proposed new full-length windows, with obscure glass, will provide better lighting and ventilation than roof lights in the proposed extension. However, in the contextual framework of the proposed development I consider that the introduction of three windows along the boundary wall will be out of context and would not be in keeping with the character and appearance of the area or the streetscene.
9. In my judgment, the existing rear extension to the host property is no longer fit for purpose having been originally constructed apparently without planning permission, and with poor quality materials. The current internal arrangements present a discordant and dislocated appearance.
10. Further, the current conjoined use of the ground floor commercial unit and a residential first floor unit above provides a challenging interface between business and residential uses. Therefore, in essence the current arrangements lack integrity both visually and architecturally and make no contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
11. In terms of form and scale, the proposed development is slightly higher by about 450mm than the existing building. The purpose for this marginal increase in height is to provide an adequate operational environment within the context of the proposed re-ordering of the internal layout of the new extension. This will be achieved by raising the internal floor level of the proposed development. In this regard it also seeks to provide conformity within the existing extension and the host property so as to eliminate current differences in internal floor levels represented by a series of steps. It also seeks to eliminate the difference in level between the outside passageway at the side of the boundary wall and the existing extension.

12. I consider that the scale and main form of the proposed development is sensitive and acceptable. It will improve the appearance of the site, and the street scene and would not detract from, or materially harm, the integrity of the pattern of the buildings or the street scene in the area. However, this is not sufficient reason to overcome the harm I have found in respect of the windows.
13. Accordingly, the proposed development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. It is therefore contrary to Policies BE1 (Built Environment) and HE1 (Heritage) of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One – Strategic Policies (November 2012); and Policies BE5 (Within areas of special local character new development should harmonise and respect the symmetry of the original buildings), BE13 (New development must harmonise with the existing street scene), BE15 (Alterations and extensions to existing buildings) and BE19 (New development must improve or complement the character of the area) of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two – Saved UDP Policies (November 2012), now replaced by the new Local Plan adopted on 16 January 2020.
14. Thus, for the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Edward Cousins

INSPECTOR