



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2020

by P B Jarvis BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/20/3249712

23 Hillingdon Road, Gravesend, DA11 7LQ.

- 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 Dilip Sandhu against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20191138, dated 18 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is a new paved drive area.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the street scene.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a terraced property of Edwardian age. It is located in a road of similar age and style properties, mainly terraces. The majority of those which lie in the eastern half of the road have hardstanding areas within the front gardens providing off street parking. Conversely, the majority of the properties in the western half of the street do not.
4. The front garden areas of the properties along the southern side of the road in the western part of the road, which includes the appeal site, are predominantly at a higher level than the road and pavement with front retaining walls. These walls increase in height towards the far western end reflecting the downward slope of the road. The majority of these front gardens are retained as such with a variety of lawned areas and other vegetation, giving the road an attractive 'green' appearance compared to the eastern half. There are also a number of street trees.
5. The front boundary of the appeal site consists of a stone retaining wall of around a metre height with raised paved area behind; there is a single large bush along the site frontage with further vegetation around the paved area and a hedge along the side boundary adjoining steps up to the front door.
6. The proposal would involve the excavation of the existing front garden, including removal of the wall, the paved area, all vegetation and steps, and its replacement with a single large hardstanding area across the almost the whole width and depth of the frontage enclosed by a perimeter retaining wall. It would slope to reflect the difference in levels between the road and the front of

the dwelling which is around 0.7 metres. A new narrow strip of planting would be introduced along the western boundary.

7. I consider that, given the character of this part of the street scene, in particular that it is within that part of the street which remains relatively unspoilt in terms of its more vegetated character compared to the eastern end of the street, the proposed hardstanding would introduce an unacceptably harsh feature that would detract from that established character. Whilst it would include the introduction of a narrow strip of new planting along one side boundary, the proposal would inevitably result in the loss of the street tree which is located towards the centre of the site frontage.
8. The appellant has referred to a permission which was granted in 2018 for the creation of a vehicular access and associated hardstanding area at No. 10 Hillingdon Road. That permission included a greater provision for landscaping to that which is now being proposed and it appears that the difference in level between that site and the pavement was not as great as is the case with the appeal proposal. In addition, it is not clear from the information provided whether the proposal involved the loss of a street tree. I therefore do not consider that to be a directly comparable situation.
9. I therefore find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the street scene. It would therefore conflict with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) which seeks to ensure that new development is visually attractive, conserves the character of the built environment and integrates well with the surrounding area.
10. I appreciate that the proposal would enable the residents of the property to park their car off-street but the benefit to be gained by that is not outweighed by the considerable adverse impact that the proposal would have on the visual appearance and character of the street. The extent of the proposed hardstanding area would leave little room for the provision of new vegetation with only a small strip to be provided along one boundary and there would be the further loss of the street tree. The harm would not be satisfactorily mitigated in my view.
11. For the reasons given above it would also fail to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework in particular paragraph 127 which, amongst other things, seeks the creation of high quality places and buildings, sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.

Conclusions

12. I therefore conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

P Jarvis

INSPECTOR