



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 February 2021

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 February 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/D/20/3263865

62 Milton Mount Avenue, Pound Hill, Crawley, RH10 3DS

- 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 Anwar against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2020/0528/FUL, dated 24 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a first-floor front extension over existing garage, front porch canopy, two-storey side extension, and single-storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of a first-floor front extension over existing garage, front porch canopy, two-storey side extension, and single-storey rear extension at 62 Milton Mount Avenue, Pound Hill, Crawley, RH10 3DS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref CR/2020/0528/FUL, dated 24 August 2020, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drg Nos WPD8718/A/03 Rev B, WPD8718/A/30 Rev B, WPD8718/A/31 Rev B, WPD8718/A/32 Rev B, WPD8718/A/33 Rev B, WPD8718/A/34 Rev B, WPD8718/A/35 Rev B, WPD8718/A/36 Rev B, WPD8718/A/37 Rev B, WPD8718/A/38 Rev B, and WPD8718/A/39 Rev B.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the Tree Survey, Arboricultural Implication Assessment and Tree Protection Plan prepared by Phelps Associates dated 22nd November 2018. The measures for tree and root protection shall be retained throughout the duration of the construction of the development hereby permitted.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a detached, two-storey dwelling set amongst a continuous row of others along Milton Mount Avenue, a wide, tree lined road defined within the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015 – 2030 (LP), adopted in 2015, as an Area of Special Local Character (ASLC). LP Policy CH14 requires all development within an ASLC to respect or preserve the existing character and appearance of the area, stating that proposals should be of an appropriate scale, design, and massing, and should not result in significant adverse impact on the locality, its surrounds, and vistas. The Council's *Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document* October 2016 (SPD) describes the predominant feature of the Milton Mount Avenue ASLC as being the large grass verges in front of the dwellings' generous front gardens, the large trees along the street, and the detached nature of the homes, which were built after the 1950s. The variety to the architecture is recognised, as is the predominance of brick facades.
4. During my visit I was struck by the largely inconspicuous presence of the dwellings in the general vista along Milton Mount Avenue. This is due to the unusually spacious frontages to each side of the highway, creating a wide separation between dwellings to each side of the road, and the dominant visual presence of the mature trees which create the distinctive avenue appearance. Although there are some repeat dwelling types, there is obvious variation between the appearance and style of most houses. Whilst brick finishes are widespread, the colours and brick detailing vary, and other materials are regularly used, including examples of render, tile hanging, and timber cladding, some with contemporary choices of colour. None of the variations appeared to me as incongruous. Given the variety, I was unable to identify any particular material as more appropriate than any other, in any particular case. More significantly, I found no uniformity to the architecture overall that was important to the area's special character, which was considerably more dependent upon the layout, spacing and scale of the buildings, together with the dominance of trees and sense of space, rather than the individual appearance of any dwelling.
5. The property benefits from an extant planning permission (Ref: CR/2018/0797/FUL) with an exact same description as the appeal proposal. That permission includes a condition that prescribes the strict use of mixed materials including specific roof and hanging tiles, smooth white render, white window frames and barge boards, and timber doors and canopy to the front elevation. Significantly, no brickwork was proposed. The appeal proposal is for an alternative version of the approved scheme. Western red cedar timber cladding is proposed at first floor for the two forward projecting gables, as well as timber effect aluminium windows, front door, garage door, and fascias, all with an anthracite grey finish. White render and plain roof tiles would be used on the remaining exterior finishes, consistent with the previous proposal. In addition, feature glazing panels are proposed extending up to the apex of the

gable projections, as well as a vertically proportioned glazing panel at first floor above the entrance door giving light to the internal hall and stairway.

6. Although the two front gables would significantly change the appearance of the existing dwelling, the remodelled scale, bulk, and mass of the house would be appropriate for the size of the plot, and relationship with both neighbouring properties. As a single entity, the dwelling would appear as a co-ordinated, balanced, and cohesive building unit. The use of timber cladding and render would complement each other and based on my own observations, neither material would be alien to the area. The window apertures would integrate with the form of the dwelling; their vertical proportions partially reflecting similar feature windows exhibited by some other dwellings nearby. Moreover, I saw no evidence of any standard size to the array of window openings on display elsewhere. I accept that the choice of colour for the window frames and other component parts of the building would be different, but I am not persuaded that this, or any of the other alternative choices that are proposed, would be unsuitable or likely to appear more conspicuous than any of the other variations that already exist between dwellings along Milton Mount Avenue.
7. The extant planning permission already proposes significant changes to the existing dwelling. The alternative use of materials now proposed would add further to the change, and I appreciate the need to carefully consider the impact of new development, including through the choice of materials. However, given the variety of building designs and appearances along Milton Mount Avenue, my impression overall is that the remodelled building would be comfortable in its setting. The changes to No 62 would not directly impact the principal identified features of Milton Mount Avenue that give the area its special character. I am satisfied that the proposal would display an acceptable standard of design quality that would respect and preserve the character and appearance of the area. I therefore find no conflict with the aims and objectives of the SPD, or with the specific requirements of LP Policy CH14 and Policy CH3, which deals with the normal design requirements for new development. Neither do I find conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework's objectives for achieving well designed places.

Conditions

8. A condition specifying the relevant plans is necessary as this provides certainty. The Council has suggested a condition requiring the external materials to match those used in the existing building. However, this matter goes to the heart of this appeal. The proposal would substantially remodel the appearance of the building, and for the reasons given, I have found the choice of alternative materials, as shown on the plans, to be acceptable. No such condition is therefore necessary.
9. The application was accompanied by an arboricultural report. This includes a proposal for protective fencing to be erected for the construction period to safeguard trees to the front of the site that are covered by a Tree Preservation Order. A condition along the lines proposed by the Council to secure the implementation of the tree protection is necessary in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given, I am satisfied that there would be no harm to the character or appearance of the area. Accordingly, in the absence of any other conflict with the development plan, the appeal is allowed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR