



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 February 2021

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H1515/W/20/3262338

Paglesham 23 Ridgeway, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex CM13 2LP

- 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 & Mrs Mack against the decision of Brentwood Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00648/HHA, dated 3 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing house and proposed replacement dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and (ii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of 21 Ridgeway with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is within Hutton Mount, a residential area characterised by detached dwellings of individual designs which are typically set well apart from one another on substantial plots. This allows views from the street scene to backdrops of deep rear gardens and mature landscaping, and together with the general position of dwellings behind generous frontages results in a distinctive spacious character to the area. Dwellings on Ridgeway are in many cases fairly large, but with significant articulation in both their footprints and at roof level which helps to break up their overall bulk and mass. Along with the usually modest proportions of the windows and predominant external finishes of brickwork, tile hanging and clay roof tiles, this provides for an attractive sense of coherence overall, despite the variation in their form and appearance.
4. The existing dwelling on the site fills much of the width of the plot, and does not achieve 1.2m spacing to the boundaries to its sides as required by Policy H15 of the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan 2005 (BRLP). However, the first-floor level is in part accommodated within the sloping roof which extends up to a fairly narrow ridge line, reducing the width and mass of the building and providing for significantly increased spacing around the upper part of it.

5. The width of the proposed dwelling would be similar to the existing building at ground-floor level, but the first floor would be much wider as well as of increased depth. The dwelling would also be much taller, with a large crown roof section behind a ridge of far greater width. As a result, there would be a substantial increase in the scale, mass and bulk of the upper part of the building on the site with a corresponding loss of openness. The appearance of bulk would be further increased by the relatively limited articulation to the building as a whole, and most notably to the sides where the extent of fenestration and detailing would do little to break up their depth or add visual interest. While the development would not extend closer to the boundaries to its sides than the existing dwelling, it would therefore result in a marked reduction in openness on the site and would detract from the spacious character of the street scene.
6. Moreover, there would be a stark contrast with the much more modest scale and mass of the neighbouring dwellings at 21 and 25 Ridgeway, including at roof level where the comparative bulk and depth of the building would be striking and unduly dominant. The increased height of the dwelling would additionally sit well above the ridge of No 21, and would be particularly jarring given the close proximity of these buildings. Notwithstanding examples of large properties within the area referred to by the appellant, these factors would exacerbate the visual impact and prominence of the development on this site in views from the street scene.
7. Given the variation in the appearance and external materials to buildings in the vicinity where I did observe some more modern examples, I do not consider that a more contemporary appearance would inevitably be incompatible. Nevertheless, the large extent of glazing including full height first floor windows would stand out against the more restricted proportions which are characteristic of the area, and the proposed slate roof would be somewhat unusual. Irrespective of the inclusion of gable roof elements, the overall appearance of the dwelling would be uncharacteristic, compounding the unsympathetic nature of the proposal.
8. For these reasons, I find that the development would be a highly prominent and intrusive feature in the street scene, and there would be unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CP1 and H15 of the BRLP which broadly seek a high standard of design and development that is compatible with the character and appearance of the area. There would also be conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) insofar as it requires well-designed places and development that is sympathetic to local character, as well as with advice within the National Design Guide seeking development that responds positively to its context.

Living Conditions

9. The development would be a similar distance from the dwelling at 21 Ridgeway as the existing building, but would extend some way beyond the rear of this neighbour at first-floor level, with a further single storey element increasing the depth of built form closest to the boundary. There would also be a significant increase in the height of the building on the site, and while the ridge would be set in, the eaves closest to the boundary would be much higher than currently where the dwelling roof extends down to meet the ground-floor level. The

gable feature to the rear would also add considerable bulk and mass to the deepest part of the roof adjacent to the boundary.

10. The main parties indicate that the development would accord with guidance within the BRLP concerning intrusion of a 45 degree angle from No 21, but that fact in itself is not conclusive proof that there would be no harm and it is important to consider the specific circumstances of the proposal. Combined with its close proximity, I find that the considerable bulk and mass of the upper part of the dwelling and significant depth beyond the rear of No 21 would in this case result in a dominant and intrusive feature as seen from this neighbouring building. Despite the flat roof design, the additional depth at ground-floor level would further increase the overall bulk and mass of the building and therefore its imposing effect, with existing vegetation to the boundary offering only very limited screening. As a consequence, I find that the development when taken as a whole would be overbearing and would result in an unacceptable loss of outlook for occupiers of No 21.
11. I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of occupiers of 21 Ridgeway with particular regard to outlook. This would conflict with Policy CP1 of the BRLP which includes a requirement to consider quality of living conditions for adjoining buildings, as well as with the Framework which requires a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other Matters

12. I am sympathetic to the appellant's desire for accommodation and light within the dwelling. However, this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
13. The appellant has also provided photographs of other dwellings within the area which include gabled elevations, varying extents of glazing and brick and render finishes. However, I do not have details of the location of these features or the relevant considerations which led to their approval, and they are not representative of the built form that I observed in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site. The weight that I can give to these examples is therefore limited. In any event, each case must be determined on its own merits, and given the harm identified above they have not altered my overall decision. There is also no firm evidence demonstrating that the effect of extensions which may be possible under permitted development rights would be comparable to those which would result in this case.

Conclusion

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

J Bowyer
INSPECTOR