
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 August 2021

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 September 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/D/21/3275815
53 Heath Drive, Romford, RM2 5QP

- 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 Stephen Bailey against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref. P1875.20, dated 11 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing timber shed and decking to be replaced with new garden outbuilding, incorporating, seating area, gym and pump room for outside swimming pool. Adjacent to the outbuilding it is proposed to lay new patio area and construct new swimming pool.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the appeal was lodged a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published. However, as the policies of most relevance to this proposal have not changed fundamentally it has not been necessary to seek further comments from the parties.
3. On 5 July 2021, the Council granted planning permission for a 'single storey outbuilding, patio, and swimming pool to rear involving demolition of existing outbuilding and patio to rear', under application ref. P0889.21. Although no plans of the development have been supplied, the agent and the Council's officer report confirm that the approved building is 6m wide and 4m deep, and clad in stained natural wood tongue and groove cedar boards. The building has been constructed on site and the swimming pool is under construction. As planning permission has been granted for the swimming pool and patio, this appeal will focus on the proposed outbuilding.
4. The appellant advises that the constructed outbuilding has been designed to be extended (to the width of 12.5 m) if the planning appeal is allowed. However, the shape of the building constructed, its glazing pattern and materials do not reflect those of the building the subject of this appeal. For the avoidance of doubt, I have therefore determined this appeal on the basis of the development shown on the submitted plans as 'proposed'.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal site and its setting in the Gidea Park Conservation area.

Reasons

6. The appeal property is located within the Gidea Park Conservation Area, and the associated Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (CAMP) notes that the area was originally intended to be a garden suburb, and bears evidence of the architectural and social ideals of the time in its layout, plot arrangement and architectural concepts. The CAMP notes that the variety of designs and the mature planting in streets, gardens and open spaces contribute to a residential environment of high quality. It also confirms that the principal impression in the area north of Main Road (which includes the appeal site) is of spaciousness, and individual plots are generous. Private gardens are noted as an integral part of the area's character.
7. There is a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in exercising planning functions, and this is reflected in DPD Policies CP18 and DC68. Amongst other criteria, DPD Policy DC61 also requires development to maintain, enhance or improve the character and appearance of the local area, and to complement or improve the amenity and character of the area through its appearance, materials, layout and integration with surrounding land and buildings. This is supported by the Council's 'Heritage' Supplementary Planning Document 2011, which notes that new buildings should respect the important characteristics of a conservation area, including scale, space between buildings and landscape character.
8. In this context, the proposed building would occupy almost the full width of the rear garden, and would be sited close to an outbuilding at 54 Heath Road. Whilst I have given weight to the presence of other outbuildings in the vicinity, none appear to be as wide as proposed in this case, and the gaps that exist between them are important in retaining the sense of space within this rear garden environment. The proposed size and siting would result in modest separation from the outbuilding at No.54, and this would create the perception of an overly dominant building group at the end of the gardens. This would undermine the Garden Suburb character, but would also have a tangible impact as the existing buildings can be glimpsed in views across gardens from Risebridge Road to the north.
9. Given its large footprint, the scale of the proposed building would not appear subordinate relative to the plot, in conflict with the guidance set out in the Havering 'Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document 2011'. In view of the important contribution that gardens make to the spacious character of the area, I do not share the appellant's view that the proposal would not impact any of the integral characteristics identified within the CAMP.
10. I therefore conclude that the size, scale and siting of the proposed building would detract from the spaciousness of the garden and its setting, and in so doing would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the appeal site and Gidea Park Conservation Area. This would be contrary to DPD Policies C18, DC68 and DC61 and the SPDs identified above.

11. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area, paragraph 202 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. On the basis of the information supplied in this appeal, no public benefits would appear to result, and the harm would not be outweighed.

Conclusion

12. For the above reasons, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR