



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 April 2021

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/20/3260124

Balfour House, 394-398 High Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 1TL

- 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 Mark Kerridge and Jay Edmunds against the decision of London Borough of Redbridge Council.
 - The application Ref 0536/20, dated 1 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 24 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is for the addition of two additional storeys to the rear block of Balfour House to increase the number of storeys from four to six to provide 9 residential dwellings with amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the determination of this application the Government has published revised National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)¹. This includes substantial revisions to the chapters on achieving well designed places whose implications may be considered to have an effect upon the determination of this appeal. In light of this the opinion of the parties was sought but no response forthcoming. As such I have applied the revised guidance within the Framework within this appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the impact of the proposals upon the character and appearance of the area and to the significance of a Non Designated Heritage Asset nearby.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located along High Road Ilford within a largely mixed area of houses, businesses and shops, the majority of which consist of two or three storey properties. The appeal property consists of a larger block whose primary element is shaped in a 'T' form with its long, symmetrical, elevation fronting onto High Road and a rear wing extending south towards Connaught Lane and St Marys Road.

¹ Revised National Planning Policy Framework published 20 July 2021

5. The existing building gradually steps up from Connaught Lane at the rear and the height of the building gradually increases to five storeys fronting High Road. Due to this increase in scale amongst an area of more low rise buildings Balfour House appears as a highly prominent building and, although there are other, taller, buildings that can be seen within the wider townscape, these are generally located some distance away and bear little relationship to the site's immediate context.
6. Next door to Balfour House is a Gurdwara or Sikh Temple and this building presents a striking and highly ornate domed facade fronting onto High Road. As a result, this building has been recognised by the Local Planning Authority as a Non Designated Heritage Asset due to its architectural and communal significance. Despite the building's intricate frontage however, to the rear, the building form becomes more monolithic before also sloping down towards Connaught Lane and thereby reducing its impact upon houses to the rear.
7. The appeal site has an extant Planning permission for a two storey extension to the top of the rear element of the building in order to create five flats. The current proposal would see the number of flats increased to nine units and would see a total of two extra storeys being constructed on top of the existing rear projecting element.
8. To the frontage range, there will be no vertical extension other than glazed barriers associated with proposed roof top amenity space. Therefore, much of the proposed extension will be largely shielded from views from High Road by the frontage element of Balfour House itself.
9. Although the existing Balfour House is a large building within the streetscene, the actual impact of development will be confined to the rear of the building and as such I consider that any impact upon High Road itself will be confined to minor glimpses, most likely only obtained from some distance away.
10. Moreover, I consider that the proposed extensions will not have a great visual impact upon the Gurdwara due to the orientation of the buildings to each other. Although Balfour House is adjacent, I consider that the only glimpse of the proposed extension will be from an acute angle and this would have no adverse impact upon the appreciation of the rich architectural forms and details of the Gurdwara itself. I therefore do not consider that the proposals would adversely impact upon the views or appreciation of this Non Designated Heritage Asset.
11. Balfour House is, however, experienced from nearby St Marys Road that runs to the south of the appeal site. I consider that houses on St Marys Road that are located immediately to the rear of the existing building are already faced with a large, rather monolithic building that, despite the existing Balfour House stepping down towards this rear boundary, still experience a degree of over dominance and an abrupt transition in scale that would be unusual within the general townscape.
12. The proposals differ from the previous plan in the fact that they intend to construct an extra storey to this rear projecting element with no further set back or architectural treatment to relieve this potential for over dominance. I consider that the introduction of such an increase would therefore further compound the harmful scale and dominance of the existing building within the area. Moreover, I consider that some properties along St Mary's Road will be

impacted upon more greatly due to this increase even though they are located to the south of the building.

13. In concluding therefore, although I find no harmful impact upon the Gurdwara or High Road, I do consider that the extra two storeys to the rear of Balfour House, and, more specifically, their proximity to the rear boundary, would further compound the overly dominant scale of the existing building. This is especially the case when experienced from streets and properties immediately to the south.
14. In this regard I consider that such an impact would represent serious harm to the character and appearance of the area and would have an equally harmful impact of over dominance through the proposed scale and massing upon residential properties along St Mary's Road that would conflict with policy LP26 of the London Borough of Redbridge Local Plan and The Framework.

Other Matters

15. I have evidence before me following the publication of The London Plan² that the London Borough of Redbridge is unlikely to meet the requirements for housing as required through the Plan period. The Council is also significantly underperforming in terms of housing delivery. As such the proposal must be considered in the light of the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in Paragraph 11d of the Framework.
16. There is no evidence that the appeal site is within an area, or is an asset, of particular importance that policies within the Framework seek to protect.
17. I have had regard to the shortfall in housing delivery set out in the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) advanced to me by the Appellant and, despite the Council not responding to this new evidence, I have no reason to dispute the figures advanced to me. I therefore give great weight to provision of additional dwellings that would result from the proposal.
18. I have also been made aware of other such cases within the Borough that have been permitted due to the under-provision in housing delivery. However, I have no information before me as to the precise nature of these developments, or the background to them, and as such can only give this evidence little weight in this decision.
19. In considering this matter, the provision of new housing would represent a long term benefit to the local area. However, in this regard I am also aware of the requirement within the Framework and its greater emphasis upon good design and placemaking and the need for proposals to be responsive to their context and sustainable for the long term. This is reflected in Policy LP26(L) of the Council's Local Plan where specific mention is made of the impact of proposals upon the amenity of residents through a building's scale and massing.
20. I have concluded that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and this harm would last for the lifetime of the development. In addition, I am unconvinced that the provision of additional housing would be a sustainable benefit for the long term due to the harm the proposal would have upon neighbouring houses. Therefore, although an extra 5

² The London Plan March 2021

properties is beneficial, this benefit would be eroded should the properties to the south become undesirable because of this proposal.

21. The proposed development would therefore cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, which would be substantial and enduring. This harm would be exacerbated by the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of the properties to the rear along St Mary's Road. These are important matters and would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit of the five additional dwellings that the development would provide.

Conclusion

22. I have found that the development would not comply with relevant policies in the development plan and the Framework, and no material considerations have been identified which would indicate that permission should be granted for a proposal that conflicts with these policies.
23. For the reasons above, taking into account all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR