The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 August 2021

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCIArb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2021

Appeal Reference: APP/M5450/D/21/3274027
Land at 132 Merlin Crescent, Edgware HA8 6HX

- 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 J Yosefzey against the decision of Harrow Council.
- The application (reference P/4513/20, dated 3 December 2020) was refused by notice dated 5 February 2021.
- The development for which planning permission is sought is a first-floor rear extension and external alterations.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a first-floor rear extension and external alterations, at 132 Merlin Crescent, Edgware HA8 6HX, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference P/4513/20, dated 3 December 2020), subject to the following condition.

   The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
   drawing no. A-132D-SL-001 revision 01 (site location plan);
   drawing no. A-132D-BP-002 revision 01 (site plan – block plan);
   drawing no. A-132D-PL-S-100 revision 01 (pre-existing layout (plans));
   drawing no. A-132D-EL-S-200 revision 01 (pre-existing layout (elevations));
   drawing no. A-132D-PL-110 revision 01 (existing layout (plans));
   drawing no. A-132D-EL-S-210 revision 01 (existing layout (elevations)).

Procedural matter

2. Since the development which is the subject of this appeal has already been carried out, the application is to be treated as one made under Section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Preliminary points

3. In the application form, the "description of proposed works" includes considerable detail of individual elements of the scheme as well as argument in support of the application. Notwithstanding the description that was given in the application form, therefore, the nature of the proposal can more clearly be expressed as a "first floor rear extension and external alterations", following the descriptions given in the Council's decision notice and the appeal form. I

have adopted this description in the banner headline, above, for ease of understanding.

Main issue

4. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies within a residential area of Edgware and is mainly characterised by semi-detached two-storey houses, set along the road frontages. The road layout is rather informal and the plots allow for modest front gardens (often accommodating parking spaces) and more generous back gardens. The houses themselves are most frequently finished with hipped roofs over the main floor areas, although changes have been made over the years and there is now some variety in the streetscene. The area generally has a pleasant suburban character.

6. Number 132 Merlin Crescent is located on the eastern frontage of the road, with a similarly built-up frontage on the opposite side of the road. To the rear (east), however, its garden backs on to an area of open space, the Chandos Recreation Ground. A stream, Edgware Brook, runs close to the northern boundary of the recreation ground and passes under the road north of number 134.

7. Number 132 is a semi-detached house with number 134 but whereas the latter largely retains its original form with a main hipped roof (as does number 130), number 132 has an extensive planning history and has been significantly altered in recent years. It retains a dominant gable feature on the front elevation, like other houses in the road, but the main roof has been extended and altered by the conversion of the original hipped roof to a gabled form, with an additional "box" dormer on the rear roof slope (although the dormer has little visual impact on views along the road). The front elevation of number 132 has also been altered by the addition of a single-storey porch.

8. The most recent extension and alterations (most obviously the first-floor rear extension) do not have the benefit of planning permission, however, and the planning application form states that the development for which permission is now sought was carried out during May to September 2019.

9. Policies in the Development Plan are aimed at protecting and enhancing the environment generally. The general aim of achieving good standards of design derives, in particular, from Policy D3 of 'The London Plan' (dated March 2021), Policy CS1B of the 'Harrow Core Strategy' (dated February 2012) and Policy DM1 of the 'Harrow Development Management Policies' (dated July 2013).

10. The Council's 'Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guide' (which was adopted on 15 December 2010) is also relevant, although it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan and the criteria identified within it are not necessarily determinative. Each application or appeal must be determined on its own merits.

11. Among other things, national planning policies (as set out in the 'National Planning Policy Framework') also continue to emphasise the importance of

achieving good design and they make it plain that new development should be sympathetic to its surroundings. The recent revisions to the 'National Planning Policy Framework' do not fundamentally affect these basic planning principles, in the context of this appeal.

12. The most significant element of the work for which planning permission is now sought is a first-floor rear extension, with some associated roof alterations. The works as a whole have been integrated into the overall design by the use of consistent external finishes that help to unify the building, although the first-floor extension is finished with a hipped roof that contrasts with the main gable and with the "box" dormer that has been constructed "under permitted development". The flank wall of the first-floor element is visible from the street but, architecturally, it is less visually awkward and obtrusive than the dormer construction.

13. The rearward first-floor extension is not excessively large in itself and it has only a very limited effect on the streetscene. The finished house is more bulky than others but it is not unduly so, in its context. The building now includes a variety of forms but they combine together in a reasonably coherent form and the composition is not so incongruous that a refusal of planning permission would be justified, bearing in mind the background of alterations that did not require planning permission in any case.

14. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the appeal scheme amounts to a modest extension to the existing dwelling, providing some useful additional space. I have concluded that the project does not conflict with national planning policies or the Development Plan, in principle, and that it is acceptable in planning terms. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

15. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of the condition suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal). The development has already been substantially completed and certain of the normal conditions applicable to house extensions are not applicable in the circumstances. I accept, however, that a condition is necessary, to define the planning permission by reference to the approved drawings.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR