



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 August 2022

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/22/3300232

1 Leabank Close, Harrow, HA1 3QA

- 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 Ms Wendy Huang against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/1141/22, dated 22 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2022.
 - The development proposed was described as '*alterations to existing roof with rooflights, dormer windows to the front and rear*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of a first-floor front infill extension to roof, alterations and extension to roof, three front dormers, rear dormer, seven rooflights in front roofslope, and external alterations at 1 Leabank Close, Harrow, HA1 3QA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P/1141/22, dated 22 March 2022.

Procedural Matters

2. The application was retrospective and at the time of my visit the development was complete.
3. The description that I have used in my formal decision is that which was used by the Council on their decision notice as this accurately but better reflects the scope of the development which has taken place when compared with that used on the original application form and which I have quoted in the banner heading above.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the Sudbury Hill Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal relates to a 1970s contemporary designed detached dwelling being one of six within a small residential cul-de-sac. Together with Nos 3-7 (odd), the property is arranged in an echelon pattern, with No 1 nearest the entrance to Leabank Close and most deeply recessed in this group of four, being set fairly inconspicuously behind a turning head in the road.

6. The property was the subject of a recent appeal decision in February 2021 when planning permission was granted for what was described as '*first floor front infill roof extension (removal of inset balcony); three rooflights in front roofslope*' (Ref APP/M5450/D/20/3259169). The works that have been undertaken differ considerably from the previously consented scheme by including a raised ridge line, three front dormer windows, additional rooflights to the front, and a single, rear dormer window.
7. The site is located within the Sudbury Hill Conservation Area (SHCA). The previous Inspector noted that the Council's Sudbury Hill Conservation Area Appraisal (SHCAA) identifies the significance of the SHCA as being largely derived from the prominent and mostly unchanged Victorian villas and the attractive varied townscape along the ribbon of development that winds the route of Sudbury Hill and London Road. Further, that the rear of Leabank Close is visible from Green Lane and Julian Hill and that the dwellings within it are of an unobtrusive form which do not detract from the area. I have not been provided with any extracts from the SHCAA but I have no reason to question the summary of those provided by the previous Inspector and which I saw during my time on site and in the locality to be reflective of the area's special character.
8. Whilst there is some uniformity to the design approach of the dwellings in Leabank Close, including an asymmetry to the front and rear roof pitches, they are not all of the same size or orientation. Furthermore, most have been altered beyond their original form to various degrees, including the replacement on some of inset roof balconies with dormer windows to principal roof slopes facing the public domain. As such, I could detect no particular consistency to this pocket of development that was significant but rather a cohesion derived more from the seclusion of the immediate locality, some regimentation to parts of the layout, a shared pallet of materials, and commonality through scale and proportions.
9. Due to the recessed position of No 1 where it is tucked into a corner, the changes that have been brought about to the original asymmetrical roof design by alterations to the roof pitches are not evident from Leabank Close. The roof retains a degree of asymmetry and the changes have had no impact upon the layout of the cul-de-sac, which is unaltered. Neither is the increased ridge height apparent as being perceptibly different when compared with the nearest neighbour at No 3. The front dormer windows are each of modest proportions and sit comfortably contained within the roof slope and sympathetically aligned with the fenestration pattern below. Whilst the rooflights to the front elevation are numerous, I did not find them to be overly abundant or inharmonious. I found the altered roof appeared neither cluttered nor overly prominent in its setting.
10. The Council point out that the rear dormer would be 1m wider than a similar proposal that was given planning permission in March 2020 (Ref P/4372/19). The dormer that has been constructed has an obvious horizontal emphasis, being considerably wider than it is tall. I have not been provided with a copy of the plans approved in 2020 but it is clear that a dormer 1m less wide would equally be one with a strong horizontal emphasis. The existing dormer is centrally positioned and visually contained within the rear roof slope, being set appropriately up from the eaves, down from the ridge, and well away from both sides. Although not aligned, the fenestration harmonises with the window

pattern below. It appeared to me to be neither bulky nor out of keeping with the architectural style of the original house or those surrounding.

11. Overall, I was unable to detect anything about the changes to No 1 that were visually intrusive or unsympathetic. As such, I find there to be no harm to the street scene in Leabank Close, or the wider character of the area from where sight of the dwelling's altered form would be visible only from the private views from some neighbours or else is just glimpsed from further afield, all from where I consider the visual impact of the changes to be largely insignificant. Neither did I detect any harm to any of the features that give the SHCA its significance, which includes important views, the layout of the area, and the quality of the built environment.

Other matters

12. I have noted the concerns expressed by the occupiers of Palmlands, a dwelling to the northwest and which backs on to the appeal site. However, I do not consider the scale or bulk of the altered building to be excessive or the works undertaken to be unsightly. I acknowledge the neighbour's assertion that the increased size of the flank wall to No 1 has resulted in some increased shading to parts of the adjoining rear garden but this impact is localised and, in my judgement, not excessive or so severe to prevent reasonable use and benefit of the amenity offered by the garden overall. My views on these matters reflect those of the Council.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given, I find no harm to the character or appearance of the area. As a consequence, the significance of the SHCA as a heritage asset has been conserved. There is therefore no conflict with Policies D3 (D(1) and D(11)) and HC1 of The London Plan (2021), Policy CS1.B of the Harrow Core Strategy (2012), Policies DM1 and DM7 of the Harrow Development Management Policies (2013), which, among other things, all seek to ensure that development responds positively to the local and historic context and does not cause harm to designated heritage assets. Neither have I identified any conflict with the aims or objectives of the Harrow Residential Design Guide (2010) or with the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (2009), which are both also referenced within the Council's decision notice. Accordingly, in the absence of any other conflict with the development plan, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is allowed.
14. As well as the standard time limit condition the Council has suggested a condition requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and for materials to match the existing. However, as the application was retrospective, and that I have determined the development to be visually acceptable, I have no reason to impose any conditions.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR