



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 December 2022

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/P1940/D/22/3307177

10 Grosvenor Road, Northwood, Hertfordshire HA6 3HJ

- 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 Qaiser Vakani against the decision of Three Rivers District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/0720/FUL, dated 13 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is two storey front, side and rear extensions and loft conversion including roof extensions, and insertion of rooflights.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the living conditions of adjacent occupiers, with particular regard to the outlook from 12 Grosvenor Road.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The host is a detached two storey property which is set back from Grosvenor Road, behind a front garden. In common with those nearby properties in a broadly similar style, it has a prominent two storey projecting gable with bay windows typical of its era. That, along with recessed and set down single storey and two storey sections to the sides, breaks up the building's mass. Consequently, like most nearby properties, including those which have been significantly extended, it presents an articulated appearance in the streetscene.
4. The scheme would not extend beyond the outermost reaches of the host's footprint, nor exceed its maximum height. Whilst the dwelling's size would increase considerably, given the varied proportions of nearby properties that in itself would not be harmful.
5. However, the resultant dwelling would have an almost straight front face and flanks. That lack of any significant articulation would give it a very rectilinear mass, which would be at odds with the area's prevailing character, and it would appear bulky and excessively dominant in the streetscene.

6. Given its elevated position, the proposed crown roof would not be very noticeable from Grosvenor Road, and there are other such roofs nearby, such as at Nos 1, 4, 5, 6 and 9. However, those dwellings, and the other examples of significantly extended dwellings at 18 and 19 Grosvenor Road, generally present greater articulation in the streetscene than would be the case here.
7. The proposed front-facing, ground to eaves, glazing serving the hallway, would be of a contemporary appearance, but in this prominent position it would jar and compete with the style and design of the host's bay windows. Whilst there are occasional examples of floor to ceiling windows in the wider area as demonstrated in the Design Access Statement, here it would significantly erode the visual dominance of that distinctive architectural feature, and it would add to the harm that I have found by reason of the scheme's bulk.
8. For the above reasons, the scheme's form and style would significantly harm the area's prevailing character and appearance. It would thus conflict with Policies CP1 and CP12 of the Three Rivers Core Strategy 2011 ('TRCS'), and Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 of the Three Rivers Development Management Policies Local Development Document 2013 ('TRDMP').
9. Amongst other things, and in general terms, these set out that development shall have regard to the local context and respect the character of the streetscene; and that whilst it should make an efficient use of land, it shall also respect an area's quality and distinctiveness with regard to matters such as scale, form and massing.

Living conditions

10. Amongst other things, TRDMP Appendix 2 states that, whilst applications will be assessed on their merits, two storey development to the rear should not intrude into a 45 degree splay line across the rear garden, drawn from a point on the joint boundary level with the rear wall of the adjacent property.
11. The scheme would bring the flank of this property closer to the boundary with 12 Grosvenor Road ('No 12') at first floor and roof level. The Council sets out that it would intrude into the 45 degree splay contrary to the criteria in Appendix 2, although it also acknowledges that the existing development is not compliant in that regard.
12. However, as a result of this scheme, a similar gap would be provided to the side boundary as at present, and I observed that the side wall of No 12 is also set in from that boundary. Although the scheme would project beyond No 12's rear face, that property's closest rear facing windows are a significant distance away; and the scheme's roof would also slope away from the boundary.
13. The outlook from No 12's rear facing windows and adjacent outdoor space is mainly down that property's long and wide garden, and whilst this scheme would be visible to the side, for the above reasons it would not have a significantly harmful impact on those occupiers' living conditions.
14. Consequently, having regard to the particular site circumstances here, whilst the scheme would intrude into the 45 degree splay, it would not conflict with the thrust of TRCS Policy CP12 and TRDMP Policy DM1 and Appendix 2 which set out that development is expected to protect residential amenities and to take into consideration their effect on neighbours with regard to matters including outlook.

Other matters

15. The appellant considers that the Council's pre-application advice did not align with precedents in the area, that the application was prejudged, and that its decision was highly subjective and ambiguous. However, I have dealt with the scheme before me on its planning merits, having regard to its context, and against relevant development plan policies.
16. In its favour, the scheme would make an efficient use of the land and it would provide the layout and space required by the appellant's growing family.

Conclusion

17. I have found that whilst the scheme would not harmfully impact the living conditions at 12 Grosvenor Road, it would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. The scheme's limited benefits would not outweigh the significant harm that it would cause. It would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole and, having regard to all other matters raised, including representations by interested parties, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR