



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2023

by A Caines BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/D/22/3311538

69 Firs Drive, Hounslow TW5 9TA

- 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 Bij against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00452/69/P8, dated 15 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as retrospective planning application for the erection of a rear and side roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the description of development used in the appeal form and decision notice because it more accurately and concisely describes the development proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Cranford Village Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The Cranford Village Conservation Area (the CA) includes a number of character areas which give it a distinctive village identity. The appeal property is located within the Firs Drive Character Area. The Cranford Village Conservation Area Appraisal (2018) describes this as an estate of well-maintained, detached and semi-detached houses, a number of which are located around small, attractive greens. All are coherent in design and some are of exceptional quality.
5. The appeal property is an extended two-storey, semi-detached dwelling and forms part of a group of similar hipped roof dwellings surrounding an attractive green. It is wholly representative of the Firs Drive Character Area and positively contributes to the significance of the CA as a designated heritage asset.
6. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. Similarly, Policy CC4 of the Hounslow Local Plan (2015) (the LP) seeks to conserve and

take opportunities to enhance the significance of the borough's network of designated heritage assets. Also relevant are Policies CC1, CC2 and SC7 of the LP, which amongst other things, expect developments to have regard to local design standards; respond to an area's character, the wider context and history of the area; promote high quality design and architecture; and support the extension of residential properties where these do not result in harm to the existing building and surrounding built environment.

7. The Council also refers to its adopted Residential Extension Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document 2017 (the SPD). Specifically in relation to dormer windows, it advises that these should be modest in scale and set in from all sides of the roof. This is particularly important for side dormers, which are required to have a pitched roof to match the main roof slope. It also states that where dormers are proposed on both the side and rear roof slopes, they must remain independent from each other and not wrap around to create one large extension. Given the role of this guidance in supporting Policy SC7 of the LP and its consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) aims to achieve well-designed places, I attach significant weight to the SPD in this appeal.
8. The roof alterations which are the subject of this appeal are already in situ and comprise of two linked, flat roof dormer windows on the rear and side roof slopes. Together, they form an ungainly box-like structure occupying a disproportionately large part of the roof slopes in which they are set and do not reflect the proportions and detailing of the host building. The jarring manner in which the structure cuts across, and does not sit centrally within, the side roof slope adds further to the discordant and unsympathetic appearance of the development. These harmful effects are not mitigated by its cladding in similar materials to the roof. Consequently, the development is not a well-designed and sympathetic addition to the building and the CA of which it is a part.
9. I recognise that only part of the development is visible from Firs Drive. However, the requirement for development proposals to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA applies with equal force irrespective of whether it is prominent or in wider public view. Furthermore, paragraph 134 of the Framework is clear that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents.
10. The presence of other rear dormer windows which lie outside the CA, such as those in Mornington Crescent, are not justification for harmful development at the appeal site.
11. I therefore conclude that the development has an adverse visual effect on the host building and its immediate surroundings, and as a consequence has failed to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA as a whole. Whilst the harm to the CA can be classed as less than substantial, this is nevertheless a matter of considerable importance and weight. Given the nature of the development, there are no public benefits which outweigh that harm. Thus, the proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of the Act, and the Framework with regards to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It is also contrary to the design and heritage requirements of Policies CC1, CC2, CC4 and SC7 of the LP, as well as the SPD.

Other Considerations

12. The appellant has advanced a 'fallback position' based on an extant planning permission Ref: 00452/69/P10, which includes side and rear dormers. The consideration of a fallback position is a well-established principle and given the effort spent advancing both options to date I consider that there is a possibility of the fallback position actually taking place.
13. However, the approved dormers differ from the appeal scheme in a number of significant ways. Most notably, they are not linked, and the side dormer is considerably smaller and centrally positioned. As a consequence, I consider that the visual effect of the fallback position would be less harmful than the appeal scheme. Accordingly, the weight that I attach to the fallback position is minimal.

Conclusion

14. I have found that the development has not preserved or enhanced the character or appearance of the CA and conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no considerations, including the suggested fallback position, to justify making a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR