
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2023

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/D/22/3307539

23 Norwich Road, Northwood HA6 1ND

- 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 Neelam Bharadava against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 76940/APP/2022/1691, dated 24 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is installation of a metal railing at parapet level as a protection edge.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for installation of a metal railing at parapet level as a protection edge at 23 Norwich Road, Northwood HA6 1ND in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 76940/APP/2022/1691 dated 24 May 2022 subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) Unless otherwise amended under the condition below, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: NB-01, NB-005 and NB-006.
 - 3) The metal railing hereby permitted shall not be installed until further details of the detailed design, materials and external finish of the railings have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area; and (ii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of 21 and 25 Norwich Road with particular regard to privacy.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. Norwich Road is predominantly characterised by semi-detached dwellings of a few different original designs, although there are also a number of detached two-storey dwellings and bungalows present. Some of the semi-detached pairs are two-storey buildings with pitched or hipped roofs. However, many closest

to the appeal site have flat roofs, often with set back higher central sections, render finishes and decorative detailing around entrances and between the first floor windows which give them a distinctive art deco style appearance.

4. The appeal dwelling is part of one such pair which has two-storey sections with flat roofs to either side of a central three-storey flat roof projection. The appeal proposes railings above the parapet wall around the roof to the two-storey part of the dwelling. The Council asserts that the development would be an incongruous addition, commenting that balconies and roof terraces are not established features of the street scene. However, I observed doors providing access to the flat roofs of some dwellings, including the appeal property, from the street. The information before me does not indicate that there is currently any restriction on use of the flat roof of the dwelling as a terrace, even if the appeal were to be dismissed. Although the railings would provide additional protection to the edge of the roof, there is already a parapet which offers some protection, and I am not persuaded that the proposal would facilitate a new or significantly different use from that which could already occur.
5. Moreover, the appellant has provided images showing artificial turf and garden furniture to the roofs of 5 and 7 Norwich Road, suggesting that at least some of the flat roofs nearby are used as terraces. I acknowledge that the railings would be a more visible signal of the use of the appeal dwelling roof as a terrace, but in this respect, the use of the roof as a terrace would not be exceptional or out of keeping with the character of surrounding buildings.
6. I did not see railings to any other nearby buildings, but I agree with the appellant that such features can respect the sleek lines and geometric forms that are typical of art deco buildings, and in my experience, railings would not be an unprecedented element of buildings in this style. Indeed, I note an example within the appellant's evidence of railings to an art deco building elsewhere. The railings would also be of significantly lower height than the second-floor of the building, and subject to the diameter of the bars and a design that provides for reasonable spacing between them, the railings would have a fairly lightweight appearance that would retain clear views through them.
7. These factors would reduce the visual impact of the development, and I am satisfied that a sympathetic detailed design and finish to the railings to complement the host building could be secured by a planning condition. On that basis, I find that the railings would be a relatively discreet addition that would assimilate well with the architectural style of the dwelling, and that the development would not harmfully erode the character, appearance, or integrity of the host building.
8. In addition, there is already some variety in the architectural design, form and appearance of other buildings nearby, including examples of semi-detached dwellings which differ from their attached neighbour. These include 17 and 19 Norwich Road which appear to be of similar original form to the appeal dwelling pair at ground and first-floor levels, but which have roofs of significantly different height to one another. Although the railings would be visible including from Norwich Road, I find having regard to this context and the modest visual impact of the development that their presence would not be striking or unduly prominent in the street scene, and the group value of properties around the site would not be harmfully diminished.

9. The submitted plans also indicate some alterations to fenestration to the second floor of the dwelling. The Council considers that the changes would be acceptable and comments that they would not require planning permission, and I have no firm reason to find differently.
10. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the host dwelling or area, and the development would accord with Policies DMHD 1, DMHB 11 and DMHB 12 of the Local Plan Part 2 Development Management Policies 2020 ('the LPP2'). Together and amongst other things, these broadly seek to ensure that development harmonises with the local context and integrates with the surrounding area, and that extensions and alterations respect the design of the host dwelling and the character, appearance and quality of the street and area.

Living Conditions

11. I have already noted that it appears that the roof of the appeal dwelling could currently be used as a terrace. In any event though, the three-storey part of the appeal dwelling projects deeper to the rear than the flat roof of the two-storey part, and would screen views from this roof towards the closest part of the garden to the attached neighbour at 21 Norwich Road. To the other side, 23 Norwich Road has a single-storey rear extension and an outbuilding close to the boundary with the appeal site which would similarly provide screening of views onto the closest part of its garden. There would be views towards the rear part of the neighbouring gardens, but these would be little different to those already available from the windows within the first and second floor levels of the appeal dwelling, and would not be unusual within a residential area. Given these factors, I find that the proposal would not result in a significant increase in overlooking or in an intrusive loss of privacy for neighbouring occupiers. Nor would the development be overbearing noting these relationships and the open nature of the railings.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions for the occupiers of 21 or 25 Norwich Road, including through loss of privacy. As a consequence, I find no conflict with policies DMHD 1 or DMHB 11 of the LPP2 insofar as they include requirements that development achieves a satisfactory relationship with adjacent dwellings and does not adversely affect the amenity of adjacent properties.

Conditions

13. I have imposed the standard time limit condition, and a condition specifying the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of certainty. The Council has suggested a condition to require the use of matching materials, but I consider given my findings on the first main issue that it is instead necessary to seek further details of the design and materials of the railings before they are installed in the interests of the character and appearance of the host building and area. The appellant has provided written approval for the imposition of this condition which would effectively need to be discharged before development could commence.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would accord with the development plan when it is read as a whole, and material considerations do

not indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR