



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 July 2023

by Robert Naylor BSc (Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 July 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/W/22/3312264

127 Chase Cross Road, Havering, Romford RM5 3YS

- 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 Mrs Jana Chetraru against the decision of the Council for the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref P1495.22, dated 11 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 9 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two storey side extension to form 2 x two storey, 3-bed, semi-detached dwellings with single storey extensions to rear, with associated parking, amenity space, and landscaped gardens involving demolition of rear garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and ii) whether the proposal would provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located on a prominent corner position at the junction of Chase Cross Road and Ascension Road in Romford. The immediate area consists of mainly 1 and 2-storey residential properties, with a traditional design although there is a variety of styles and material finishes. Whilst there is variation in the style and materials used on the external facades at the front of the properties, there is nevertheless a cohesive and rhythmic pattern to the street. From the plans before me, it is clear that the proposal consists of a 2 storey side extension to the existing (donor) property to provide a new 3-bedroom 5-person dwelling.
4. When viewed from the front, the new dwelling has been sensitively designed to appear similar to the donor property in order to be in keeping with the streetscene on Chase Cross Road. From my site observations the proposal would not appear out of keeping in respect to its height, mass and scale at the front. However, given its prominent corner position the proposal would need to address both frontages, given it has significant views from, and a strong connection with, Ascension Road.
5. The properties in Ascension Road are set back from the roadside behind front gardens creating a distinct character providing a good architectural rhythm and uniformity. The proposed dwelling would sit forward of these buildings in

Ascension Road given its location close to the red line boundary. As a result, the proposal would fail to acknowledge the change in character, and would result in an awkward, tight and incongruous relationship between the proposal and its neighbours in the Ascension Road streetscene. It is acknowledged that the proposal incorporates a hipped roof to reduce the impact of the scheme from Ascension Road following a previous refused and dismissed scheme¹. However, as the scheme still extends the full width of the site forward of these properties, it would result in a visually cramped form of development when viewed from Ascension Road.

6. The appellant draws my attention to other corner properties in the vicinity that have either been extended or contain new builds, notably at 1A Faircross Avenue and other properties along Chase Cross Road. However, I have been presented with little substantive evidence relating to their planning history or any planning policy in place at the time when these dwellings were built, thus I am unable to directly compare these examples. Furthermore, these limited examples do not provide an overriding influence over the character of the area or streetscenes. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its own merits based on all the evidence presented.
7. Consequently, the proposed development would, for the reasons above, not respect and compliment the distinctive qualities of the area given the significant increase in bulk, siting, and position close to the boundaries of the site, which would be forward of the properties in Ascension Road, and thus would appear incongruous, unduly cramped and visually intrusive. The proposal would therefore harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Accordingly, it would be contrary to Policy 26 of the Havering Local Plan 2016-2031, adopted November 2021 (HLP), which among other things require development to be of a high quality and to respect and enhance local character. The proposal would also fail to comply with Policy D4 of the London Plan, March 2021 (LP), which amongst other things, seek to secure high quality development responding to the existing character without compromising local distinctiveness. The proposal would also conflict with paragraph 130 c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which advises that new development should be sympathetic to local character.

Living conditions for future occupiers

8. The Government's nationally described space standard, March 2015 (NDSS) contains the minimum internal space requirements for new dwellings. These requirements are also applied in a local context within LP Policy D6 and Table 3.1 and HLP Policy 7. Under these requirements a 3-bedroom 5-person dwelling laid out over two-storeys requires 93m² as the minimum standard. The NDSS and LP Policy D6 further highlight that a double bedroom must have a floor area of at least 11.5m². Also, a dwelling with two or more bedspaces must have at least one double bedroom that is at least 2.75m wide. Every other additional double bedroom must be at least 2.55m wide.
9. Both parties agree that the proposal would exceed the minimum gross internal floor area of 93m² for both the donor and proposed dwelling. However, where there is dispute, is in respect to the proposed room sizes. The Council contends that bedroom 1 of the donor property would not meet either the minimum requirements of the NDSS and LP Policy D6 in terms of floor area or width for a

¹ PINS Ref: APP/B5480/W/22/3306750

double bedroom. Furthermore, bedroom 2 of the proposed dwelling does not meet the minimum 11.5m² floor area requirement, nor the minimum width requirement of 2.55m. I have been presented with no evidence from the appellant to the contrary.

10. Taking the above into account, I have applied the Councils figures in relation to the appeal, as these appear to reflect the proposed floor area and widths for each individual room accurately. These figures highlight that bedroom 1 of the donor property, and bedroom 2 of the proposed property, would not meet the required space standards. Given that these figures are minimum standards which are intended to act as a benchmark for high design quality, the shortfall in floorspace is not appropriate. Consequently, it would provide oppressively confined and unsuitable living conditions for future occupiers.
11. In relation to this main issue, the living conditions of future occupiers would be unsuitable due to inadequate internal space. As such, because the minimum internal qualities of housing would not be provided, the proposal would not comply with LP Policy D6 and HLP Policy 7 which amongst other things, seek to achieve high quality housing, along with the Framework, which amongst other things, seeks high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of buildings.

Other Matters

12. The appellant draws my attention to the principle of the development being acceptable, no objections from the neighbouring residents and no impacts from the proposed development on the living conditions of the existing nearby residents. Nevertheless, none of these matters are in dispute, and in any case would be neutral in the planning balance, and thus would not outweigh the identified harm to the character and appearance of the area, nor to the living conditions of the future occupiers I have identified above.

Conclusion

13. Taking all of the above into account, the proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no other material considerations to indicate that my decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
14. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Naylor

INSPECTOR