



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 August 2023

by Sarah Colebourne MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 September 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/P1940/D/23/3319186

Bracken Hall, Bracken Hill Close, Northwood, Hertfordshire, HA6 3EW

- 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 Brackenhill Developments Limited against the decision of Three Rivers District Council.
 - The application Ref 23/0042/FUL, dated 10 January 2023, was refused by notice dated 7 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is the construction of part-single storey, part-two storey side extension and single storey rear orangery extension including indoor gym and swimming pool.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Reasons

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwelling. The development plan includes policies CP1 and CP12 in the Council's Core Strategy (2011) and policies DM1, DM3 and Appendix 2 in its Development Management Policies document (2013). Together, these seek to ensure that development is of a high quality and policy DM3 also requires that the historic or architectural features of locally important buildings are retained or enhanced. Those policies accord with the National Planning Policy Framework which also seeks to encourage high quality design and for non-designated heritage assets requires that a balanced judgement is made having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the asset.
3. The appeal site lies in a secluded location despite its proximity to the built up area and is accessed from a private road through an area of woodland. Bracken Hall (formerly Brackenhill House) is designated as a locally important building.
4. The dwelling appears to have been built between 1918-1920 according to the appellant's research and was later in military use by the Ministry of Defence. Its attractive and imposing architectural form remains legible on both of its principal elevations. It has a broadly symmetrical plan form comprising two prominent, projecting hipped roof elements on either side of both the front and rear elevations with the central element in each elevation recessed. The front elevation has an Arts and Crafts character with a central element of one and a half storeys with a steeply sloping 'catslide' pitched roof and eaves at a lower height, relieved by dormers and a central projection over the front door. On the rear elevation, the recessed central element is of two storeys and it has a

grander, more formal character that could be described as Queen Anne revival or neo-Georgian. There is a hipped roof two storey element with a shallow projection on the south side elevation which is set back from both elevations and screened from view from the front by a high curved wall. A more recent detached double garage block has been constructed to the front of the dwelling. The original site has been subdivided with the previously attached annexe now forming a separate dwelling and a number of large dwellings built in the grounds to the north and south of the appeal site. There is a very large garden to the rear of the dwelling and a wide drive to the front which is partially screened by a mature hedge. The property has a moderate degree of architectural significance as a good quality house of the inter-war period and of historic significance illustrating the development of the area in that period.

5. A previous scheme which included a similar but larger single storey extension along the northern boundary of the site under ref 22/1868/FUL was refused in 2022.
6. This proposal includes an extension to the side of the existing two storey side element, an orangery to the central part of the rear elevation and a single storey rear projection along the southern boundary of the site. I have noted that the Council has raised no objection to the proposed orangery which has already been granted permission under a previous application and from what I have seen I have no reason to disagree with that.
7. It is clear from the plans that the proposed two storey side extension would continue the ridge of the existing hipped roof form to the side and would replicate the existing 'catslide' sloping roof of the central part of the front elevation with a similar roof to the front, replacing an existing area of flat roof. However, the additional width would unbalance the front elevation which is broadly symmetrical with only a very small side projection. This would be emphasised by the eaves height at first floor level which would be at odds with the lower eaves of the central element and by the additional front dormer, resulting in an oddly unbalanced appearance. I accept that this part of the front elevation would not be highly visible from the drive as it is set back from the front elevation and partly screened by the high wall but it would be seen clearly from the private drive to the two modern dwellings to the south. The rear elevation would also be unbalanced by the width of this extension and this would be clearly seen from the rear garden of the property. I find then that this would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the building which despite the presence of the existing side extension and the now separated former annexe, retains the symmetry that has always formed an important part of its significance.
8. The parties disagree about the length of the proposed single storey rear extension which would be sited to the southern side of the rear elevation and attached to the proposed side extension. I have based my assessment on the plans before me which clearly show that it would be some 21m in length when measured on its southern elevation and just under 18m when measured on its northern elevation. The plans also show that it would project some 18m beyond the rear wall of the existing two storey rear projection. It would be clearly seen from the two modern dwellings to the north of the site and from the nearest dwelling to the south. Whilst its height and roof design would reflect those of the orangery, its 21m length would not be dissimilar to the width of the existing dwelling and its width would be greater than that of the

main rear projections. As such, its scale would not be sufficiently subordinate to that of the main dwelling. Together with the proposed side extension, it would be overly dominant and would have a severely unbalancing impact on the symmetry of the rear elevation, significantly harming the character and appearance of the dwelling.

9. I have noted the appellant's reference to 1920 aerial images and a 1936 OS map which highlight that Bracken Hall historically incorporated an original detached coach house/garden room structure extending into its garden on the northern side of the garden and westwards to a comparable distance (if not further) than the appeal scheme with a series of full-height windows onto the garden in a similar manner to the appeal scheme. However, whilst that is a consideration, it differs significantly from this scheme. As it was not attached to the rear elevation and was sited some distance from the dwelling it would have had a much less dominant impact on the rear elevation than this proposal and does not therefore provide justification for the harm that would be caused in this case.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above and by reason of the siting, scale and detail of the two storey side extension together with the scale of the single storey rear extension, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling. As such it would be contrary to the development plan policies referred to earlier and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that. The appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector