

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 November 2023

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 December 2023

Appeal Reference: APP/Q5300/D/23/3330608

33 Russell Road, Enfield EN1 4TN

- 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. H. West against the decision of Enfield Council.
 - The application (reference 23/01958/HOU, dated 16 June 2023) was refused by notice dated 22 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as follows: *"proposed demolition of existing ground floor front extension, construction of two-storey front extension, loft conversion, floor plan redesign and all associated works"*.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a "two storey front extension, loft conversion, rear rooflights and construction of hardstanding", at 33 Russell Road, Enfield EN1 4TN, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference 23/01958/HOU, dated 16 June 2023), subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule of Conditions.

Preliminary points

2. Notwithstanding the description of the application that was given in the application form, the nature of the proposed development can more clearly be expressed as set out in the Council's decision notice and in the appeal form, as: "two storey front extension, loft conversion, rear rooflights and construction of hardstanding".

Main issue

3. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings in the Forty Hill Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located in a residential area of the northern part of Enfield. To the south, the locality is more conventionally suburban in character, with a consistency of development types and styles, by contrast with the nearer surroundings of the appeal site, where there is more variety. The appeal site lies in Russell Road, near its junctions with Hallside Road, Old Forge Road and

Forty Hill, where there are some interesting older buildings in an historic setting. This area, including the appeal site, lies near the southern edge (but within) the Forty Hill Conservation Area which includes the Forty Hill Estate and more open land to the north as well as the area immediately adjacent to the appeal site, which is in the more closely built up southern part of the Conservation Area.

5. Number 33 Russell Road is part of a small group of buildings at numbers 27-33. It is not a listed building but the short terrace was originally constructed as a grand mid-eighteenth century residence (referred to as 'Bridgen Hall'), as the 'Forty Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal' (dated February 2015) records. The building has been greatly altered over the years, however, and much of its original character has been lost as a result. Indeed, number 27 now has a long forward projection at the corner of Russell Road and Hallside Road.
6. In addition, number 33 itself has suffered a serious fire recently, which has left it as hardly more than a shell. At the time of the site visit, repair works were being carried out to the building, while an alternative extension scheme has previously been granted planning permission.
7. The building itself is a two-storey building in appearance, with a loft, but it is on multiple levels. It is constructed of traditional materials: brickwork under a complex pitched roof. It is set back from the roadside, with a good-sized back garden, but the existing accommodation is not extensive, providing (apparently) a kitchen, living room and dining room on the ground floor and three bedrooms on the first floor (as well as some limited ancillary accommodation), as shown on the submitted drawings.
8. It is now proposed to extend the existing house by adding to the front elevation and providing further living accommodation in the extended roof space.
9. Provisions in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 impose obligations on those considering whether to grant planning permission for development that would affect a conservation area. In such cases, decision makers are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas affected by development proposals.
10. Those formal requirements are reinforced by the 'National Planning Policy Framework', especially at Section 16, which emphasises the importance of conserving or enhancing the historic environment, though it also points out the desirability of putting a heritage asset to its "optimum viable use" as does the 'Planning Practice Guidance'.
11. More generally, the 'National Planning Policy Framework' also emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, although it is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities.

12. An emphasis on the importance of protecting heritage assets and of encouraging good design more generally is also to be found in the Development Plan. Policies in 'The London Plan' (dated 2021) encourage high quality design and protect heritage assets. Core Policy 31 of 'The Enfield Plan Core Strategy 2010-2025' (adopted in November 2010) deals with the "built and landscape heritage", while Core Policy 30 focusses on "maintaining and improving the quality of the built and open environment" more generally. Other Policies in the 'Improving Enfield Development Management Document' (adopted in November 2014) underpin the strategic approach, including Policies that are specifically concerned with residential extensions and Policy DMD44 on "conserving and enhancing heritage assets".
13. Even so, planning policies are not entirely prescriptive and every scheme must be considered on its own merits.
14. In this case, the original building and its setting have been greatly changed over the years and further change, even substantial extensions, cannot be ruled out in principle. Any new extensions would need to be sympathetic to the historic building and its surroundings, however, especially in the case of a front extension, since that would have an obvious impact on the public realm.
15. The proposed front extension would, to an extent, imitate the two central bays of the building, at 31 and 29 Russell Road. The fenestration pattern would be carried through, although the window levels on the ground floor would be varied and a new front door would be added. Numbers 31 and 29 have two bays of windows on the front elevation, with inserted front doors, while the new front elevation at number 33 would comprise a three-bay composition. This generates a more awkward roof construction, with a shallower roof pitch than that over the two central bays and the main roof.
16. Thus, the proposed design is undoubtedly ungainly in some respects. The original symmetry of 'Bridgen Hall' has been lost, however, and considerable additions and alterations have been made to the original, including the single storey front extension at number 27 and the smaller but intrusive front extension at number 33. It would not be right to treat the building as though it were listed as being of special architectural or historic interest.
17. The proposed front extension would add extra bulk to the front of the building but the original design has already been fundamentally compromised and the finished scheme would not be out of place in the streetscene. The detailed design of the extension would be broadly in harmony with the remainder of the building, provided that the materials were to be carefully chosen and the construction carefully detailed. The submitted drawings are not fully detailed but conditions can be imposed to ensure that quality is achieved.
18. In short, I have formed the opinion that the proposed two storey front extension would not cause undue harm to the host building and that it would preserve the character and appearance of the Forty Hill Conservation Area. Other elements of the project are also acceptable.
19. The appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed extension and alterations would create a useful addition to the accommodation at 33 Russell Road, making good use of a building that has already been much changed over the years. I have concluded

that the project would not be in conflict with the Development Plan, in principle, and I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

20. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of those suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal). In particular, I have concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained.
21. For the avoidance of doubt, a more specific condition has also been imposed to require the submission of details and information about the proposed construction materials (since the drawings themselves provide only limited information in this respect).

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - Unnumbered Location Plan;
 - drawing number B115324-000-1000 Rev A (Existing Drawings);
 - drawing number B115324-000-3000 Rev B (Block Plans);
 - drawing number B115324-000-3100 Rev A (Proposed Drawings).
3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
4. No materials shall be incorporated into the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted until samples (or specifications) of those materials and drawings (at appropriate scales) of the construction details to be used 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, using the approved materials.