
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2023

by C J Leigh BSc(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20.12.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/D/23/3324946

17 Briar Hill, Purley, Croydon, CR8 3LF

- 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 Suba Sandhu against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 23/00639/HSE, dated 16 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as 'enlargement of the house'.
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Preliminary matters

1. I consider the Council's description of the proposed development more accurate than that contained on the application form and so have determined the appeal on that basis, namely alterations and extensions to side and rear of existing dwelling incorporating a single/two storey side/rear extensions and roof extensions.

Decision

2. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for alterations and extensions to side and rear of existing dwelling incorporating a single/two storey side/rear extensions and roof extensions at 17 Briar Hill, Purley, Croydon, CR8 3LF in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 23/00639/HSE, dated 16 February 2023, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Reasons

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Webb Estate Conservation Area. Under s72 I have a duty under s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Area.

Character and appearance

4. The property was the subject of an appeal decision dated 13 December 2022 (ref. APP/L5240/W/22/3294573) which appraised the significance of the Conservation Area, with reference to the Webb Estate and Upper Woodcote Village Conservation Areas Appraisal and Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document 2007 (the SPD). The SPD and my colleague's observations
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described the significance of the Area arising from the garden and landscape setting, which takes priority over the buildings as a pioneering example of the 'Garden First' movement.

5. I concur with the finding that there is a verdant, tranquil, and spacious character to the estate, and that houses are set well apart from each other and also back from front boundaries. These features positively add to the character and appearance of the Area, and the significance of the Area as a heritage asset derives from these features.
6. The previous appeal was for demolition and replacement of the existing property. There was evidently discussion between the main parties as to the quality of the house, which is not statutorily or locally listed, and my colleague concluded the simple and restrained character of the Arts and Crafts style building was appropriate to its plot, typical of the time, and indicated the history of the Area; these features were in favour of retention. The proposed replacement house was considered to go against the Garden First principles of the Area, upon which the Webb Estate was founded.
7. I concur that the existing property is an attractive, restrained property that is a good reflection of the remaining character of why the Estate was originally established. The Arts and Crafts style is, like the Garden First principle itself, a clearly established movement in architecture and urban planning that promoted the values of craft and decoration, and hence the retention of this character is important.
8. The proposals in this appeal seek to retain the existing architectural character of the property through extensions and alterations. In my view, this is achieved. I accept a sizeable increase in the property would occur, but this is undertaken with clear attention to the qualities of what makes the house of interest: the low central front gable elevation to the house is retained as the principal entrance to the house, with two new gables set behind. Although those two new gables are taller – rising into the enlarged roof – a clear visual hierarchy would be retained in the house. There would be a legible front elevation of balanced gables, deep and steeply-pitched roof slopes with exposed rafter detail in open eaves, shallow bays, and well-placed and proportioned windows set back from the face of the wall that all carefully reflect the original design.
9. The extensions to the property would increase the scale of the building and result in the house filling more of the plot. However, there would be good distances retained to the boundaries, the very large rear garden area would remain little changed, and the house would not intrude upon the open area to the front boundary. The increase in height would be suitable for the plot, with the acceptability of how the building is viewed also due to the high standard of design, meaning the extended house would retain the original architectural approach. These matters mean the house remains in proportion to the plot and retains a spacious character to the wider area, with a good landscape setting to the house to ensure the site and area is not dominated. A tree survey confirms that works can be carried out without harm to retained trees.
10. The Council have raised concern that the submitted drawings do not show sufficient detail to demonstrate good quality architecture, layout and effective landscaping. I am content the drawings and accompanying information on the

application form are clear in showing the proposals, with matching materials that are characteristic of the architecture of this time, ie painted roughcast render, plain clay tiles, open eaves detail, timber doors, and timber and steel casement windows. But I am of the opinion it is essential that – to achieve the high quality extension that the appellant and architect seek –very close matching of materials is achieved, and the design of fenestration details is of a good, scholarly fashion to replicate the original Arts and Craft architectural approach of craft and decoration. I am satisfied this important objective can be secured by planning conditions, and hence the quality of the design would be high.

11. I note the SPD refers (paragraph 4.11) to the original concept for the Webb Estate being that houses were not introduced for their architectural merit, but to show how a simple and restrained style may be made more attractive by the Garden First methods. The SPD continues to say that Webb’s intention was for a high standard in the design of houses, with the size of plots allowing for differing architectural styles, and that elevations of houses should ensure views to the property were retained. I saw this approach throughout the Estate at other properties. The appeal proposals are also consistent with these observations and original intentions for the Estate: the drawings show a high standard of design that respects the original architectural approach, whilst keeping views towards and around the building, with the larger house appropriate for its plot and sitting comfortably with the design and scale of other houses in the vicinity.
12. The proposed alterations and extensions to the property would thus be appropriate to the house and the wider area. The requirements for new development as set out in the SPD would be satisfied. The significance of the heritage asset would not be harmed, and hence on the main issue it is concluded the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved.
13. The proposals would therefore be consistent with Policy DM18 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 and Policy HC1 of the London Plan 2021, which only permit development that affects heritage assets if their significance is preserved or enhanced, and the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework to place great weight on the conservation of heritage assets. There would also be no conflict with Policy DM10 of the Local Plan and Policy D4 of the London Plan, which seek to ensure new development is of a high standard of design appropriate to the local character of an area, and the requirement of the Framework to provide good design and to create high quality buildings and places.

Other considerations

14. The distance from the extended house to boundaries and adjoining properties means there would not be any overbearing impact on neighbours or appreciable loss of light. This distance and the angles between windows mean no loss of privacy, and a condition can address particular issues of overlooking.
15. Policy D12 of the London Plan states that all development proposals must achieve the highest standards of fire safety, and explains this may have spatial implications for the planning of a site or development proposals. The submitted application submitted did not provide full details on this matter, but the Council

were satisfied the nature of development meant that a condition could require approval of relevant details. I agree that the proposed extensions, when considered having regard to the layout of the site, mean in this instance that a planning condition would satisfactorily address this matter.

Conclusion and conditions

16. The proposals therefore comply with the development plan and the Framework, and represent good design that does not harm the significance of the heritage asset. The appeal is therefore allowed.
17. The Council have suggested a number of conditions in the event of the appeal being allowed. I have attached the suggested condition requiring matching materials, as specified on the drawings and on the application form, as this will ensure a suitable appearance to the extension. I have attached the condition specifying the approved plans, since these further specify materials to be used and show important design details including the junction of the roof to the elevations, and also in the interest of precision. I have attached a further condition requiring the submission and approval of detailed drawings relating to windows and doors, to ensure a high standard of design detail on these matters; as these features were shown in the drawings and described in the appellant's submissions, there is no issue in me attaching this further condition.
18. I have attached the suggested condition relating to protection of trees, in the interests of ensuring a good landscape appearance. A condition requiring the obscure glazing of the west facing bathroom window is required, to ensure no loss of privacy to neighbours. I have attached the condition relating to water storage, to assist in drainage on the site. I have also attached the suggested condition relating to submission of a detail fire safety strategy, to accord with the provisions of the London Plan relating to fire safety.

C J Leigh

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) 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.
- 3) The proposed west facing bathroom window at first floor level, as shown on drawing no. 14BH P3(A) shall be finished in obscure glazing and fixed shut above 1.7m from floor level
- 4) The proposed development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Report Arboricultural Method Statement by David Archer Associates March 2023.
- 5) At least two water butts shall be installed on completion of the proposal and shall be retained and maintained for so long as the development remains in existence.
- 6) Prior to the commencement of works above ground level a Reasonable Exception Statement which outlines that the proposed development will not alter the fire safety of the building, or a Planning Fire Safety Strategy in the event that the fire safety of the building will be altered, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 7) Prior to the commencement of works above ground level details of the design of windows, doors and exposed rafter detail in open eaves, including drawings at a suitable scale, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 8) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 14BH P1, 14BH P2, 14BH P3(A), 14BH P4(B) & 14BH P5.