
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2024

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/W/23/3326995

17 Methuen Close, Edgware, Harrow HA8 6HA

- 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 Bhavnani against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/0213/23, dated 23 January 2023, was refused by notice dated 19 June 2023.
 - The development is the provision of garden container sat atop raised brick foundation (retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The container that is the subject of this appeal is in place. It appears to be broadly in accordance with the plan.
3. Since the appeal was lodged, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published. The Framework does not raise any new matters that are determinative to the outcome of this appeal.

Main issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the local area and on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

5. The appeal container is a green coloured metal box at the rear of the appeal property, which is a semi-detached dwelling within a predominantly residential area. Although smaller than some existing outbuildings that are visible from the site, the container is still a sizeable addition. That the container also occupies a slightly elevated position on top of a raised brick plinth visually accentuates its presence especially when seen from the back garden of No 17.
6. The container is not readily evident from the road given its location behind the existing dwelling. Consequently, the development has no discernible effect on the character and appearance of the local street scene. Nevertheless, it is visible from the rear of the site and the back gardens of several neighbouring properties notwithstanding the partial screening provided by boundary fences and, depending on the private vantage point, a domestic shed.

7. With its utilitarian appearance, bulky shape and uncompromisingly solid form, the container stands uncomfortably within its residential garden setting. Having carefully viewed the container from within the site, I have little doubt that it is a visually disruptive and uncharacteristic intrusion into garden space. In addition, when seen from the rears of neighbouring properties, the container draws the eye as an obtrusive and discordant feature at the back of No 17. In these views, the container is very uneasy on the eye mainly because it looks out of place. Cladding the container with an alternative material such as timber would not satisfactorily mitigate its harmful visual impact.
8. Large outbuildings within back gardens are a notable feature of several properties close to the site and not all of these structures blend in with their residential garden setting. Even though the container is smaller and less prominent than some of these examples, it compounds their harmful effects.
9. On the main issues, I therefore conclude that the development causes significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area and the outlook of neighbouring occupiers. As such, it is contrary to Policy D3 of The London Plan, Core Policy CS1.B of the Harrow Core Strategy and Policy DM1 of the Harrow Development Management Policies Document. These policies broadly seek to ensure that development achieves a high standard of design, layout and amenity; positively responds to the local context; does not harm the character of suburban areas, and safeguards residential amenity.
10. These policies underpin the advice given within the Council's Supplementary Planning Document: *Residential Design Guide*, with which the development also conflicts. It is also at odds with the Framework, which aims to ensure that development is visually attractive, sympathetic to local character, adds to the overall quality of the area, and creates a high standard of amenity.
11. In reaching this conclusion, I appreciate that the container provides valuable storage space. The platform upon which it stands is neatly constructed. The container is placed away from the boundaries of the site and, as a result, there is no loss of natural light to the adjacent properties. I note that some local residents raise no objection. The site is not a designated heritage asset nor is it close to one. There is no evidence that the development has resulted in the loss of a significant landscape feature. I agree that a reasonable sized garden remains with the container in place. However, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

12. The development conflicts with the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including those of the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
13. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR