



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2024

by C Livingstone MA(SocSci) (hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/24/3337343

Airport Bowl, Bath Road, Hillingdon, Heathrow UB3 5AL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mandeep Dhanoa against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref is 38807/APP/2023/594.
 - The development proposed is described as side extension to Airport Bowl to include additional bowling lanes and extension of existing arcade on the ground floor. Additional first floor to include karaoke booths and a restaurant. This application is to be built alongside office space approved last year.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There is extant planning permission for the erection of an extension to the building to be used as offices which is shown on the proposed plans. As this extension benefits from planning permission my assessment focuses on the additional extensions to the front and side of the building, taking in to account the previously approved scheme.
3. As interested parties have had an opportunity to respond to the Design and Access Statement that accompanied the appeal its acceptance does not prejudice any interests.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the appeal proposal on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to its height, design and positioning.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is on Bath Road which is a long main road close to Heathrow Airport. Buildings in the area comprise mainly of large contemporary hotels serving the airport which are varied in terms of architectural style and external materials. Along this road there is little consistency in terms of plot sizes or the positioning of buildings relative to the highway. However, positioning of the appeal site and its more immediate neighbours is more consistent, being characterised by substantial intervening landscaped areas. These areas convey a strong sense of openness within the street scene.
6. Airport Bowl is a flat roofed bowling alley and is significantly lower than its neighbours as it increases from a single storey frontage to two storeys. The

appeal building is set back from the road to a similar degree as neighbouring buildings and the area between it and the road is grassed.

7. The appeal proposal is for the erection of a two storey height extension on the side and front elevations. The proposed extension would project from the side elevation that faces Bath Road and would be of a unique contemporary design which would include metal cladding in a variety of colours and finishes, which is inspired by Heathrow airport.
8. The proposed extension would take up the majority of the grassed area to the side of the appeal building and would significantly diminish the extent that the building is set back from the road. The resultant building would not reflect the positioning of neighbouring frontages relative to the road and would erode the positive sense of openness within the area. My attention has been drawn to buildings on Bath Road that are set back to a lesser extent than the appeal building including some nearby commercial and residential properties. However, these buildings neither visually relate to this part of the street scene or reflect its spacious layout which positively contributes to the character and appearance of this part of Bath Road.
9. I acknowledge that a section of the land to the side of the extension would remain undeveloped and would be landscaped, which would soften the appearance of the building. However, this does not resolve my concerns with regard to the loss of the characteristic sense of openness and space this undeveloped land currently contributes to the street scene.
10. The proposed height, simple rectangular form and external materials would sit comfortably with the surrounding buildings. Nonetheless, the design approach for the extant office extension and the appeal scheme each vary substantially. This is mainly due to the significant differential in the solid to void ratios of the resulting elevations that would be determined by the proposed fenestration treatment for each in terms of design, level and placement. There would be a consequential lack cohesion with the extant permitted office extension. This would be evident from medium distance views upon approach from along Bath Road and would be harmful to the character and appearance of the building and that would translate to the wider street scene.
11. Notwithstanding these concerns, the implementation of that extant planning permission is not guaranteed. However, the harm arising from the positioning of the extension alone leads me to find that the appeal proposal would diminish the character and appearance of the area.
12. In conclusion the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. As such it is contrary to Policy BE1 of A vision for 2026, Local Plan: Part 1 Strategic Policies 2012 (the SP), Policies DMHB 11 and DMHB 12 of the Local Plan: Part 2 Development Management Policies 2020 (the DMP) and Policy D3 of the London Plan 2021 (LonP). These policies require that new developments should achieve a high quality design in all new buildings, alterations, extensions and the public realm; take into account the surrounding building lines; is well integrated with the surrounding area and enhances local context by delivering buildings and spaces that positively respond to local distinctiveness through their layout.

Other Matters

13. My attention has been drawn to the layout of a previous approval at the site for a hotel where the side elevation was also closer to the road¹. However, since that decision was reached the policy framework has been revised and no drawings have been provided. The evidence that has been put before me does not demonstrate this argument.
14. The proposed extension would not impact on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties, it would be energy efficient and sustainable, would comply with disabled access requirements, would not have a material impact on highway safety or parking provision and would not be affected by contamination or impact on archaeology. Whilst the other technical matters of relevance to the appeal scheme are not disputed by the Council, they are of neutral consequence to my assessment.
15. The appellant's argument regarding the role of the proposed lighting to be incorporated in improving the operational presence and thus viability of the business has not been clearly evidenced and therefore carries limited weight. The refurbishment and extension of the building would allow the appellant to improve the energy efficiency and facilities available at Airport Bowl. Expansion of the business may also bring economic benefits to the appellant and the local economy.

Conclusion

16. In view of the identified conflict with Policy BE1 of the SP, Policies DMHB 11 and DMHB 12 of the DMP, and Policy D3 of the LonP, the appeal proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole. The matters weighing in favour of the appeal scheme do not outweigh that conflict.
17. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

C Livingstone

INSPECTOR

¹ 38807/APP/2008/3493