



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 September 2024

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/24/3346798

34 Hillcroft Avenue, Rayners Lane, Harrow HA5 5AR

- 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 Sivathasan Subramaniam against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref is PL/0445/24.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear infill extension, a first floor side extension and a first floor front and rear infill extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Notwithstanding the annotation on drawing no. ASEA/2023/770/PP/01, the host property is located on the corner of Hillcroft Avenue and Central Avenue.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Nearby properties are predominantly semi-detached, or more occasionally detached, and generally set back from the highway. Many, including those on Central Avenue to the north, and on Hillcroft Avenue from 22 to 38 (evens) and 37 to 43 (odds), have prominent sections of sloping roof which extend from their ridge to an eaves line at ground floor. Notwithstanding some variety in the buildings' design, along with various alterations and extensions, this roof form contributes to the area's locally distinctive character.
5. Although the host is smaller in scale than many nearby properties, given its extensive cat-slide roof, it conforms with the area's style. Other than a flat-roofed side projection, it has a broadly symmetrical shape, which includes similar dormers to the front and rear. I do not therefore agree with the appellant's characterisation of it as having a truncated and unbalanced form, and in my view, it makes a positive contribution to the area's character.
6. The proposal would involve extending the host's outer walls upwards, thus giving the resultant building a fully two storey form, and it would include a

double bay window to the front. Whilst I observed some broadly similar style dwellings elsewhere on Hillcroft Avenue, including at Nos 18 to 20, in this location its form and style would jar with the prevailing character in this part of the streetscene, including its neighbours. The high eaves line close to the cat-slide roof at 36 Hillcroft Avenue would create an awkward relationship between these two dwellings.

7. Although the scheme would not increase the host's height, its original form and architectural style would no longer be legible; and the crown roof, whilst not generally visible from public viewpoints, is indicative of the resultant building's considerable bulk. Its form and proportions would jar with its immediate neighbours, and it would appear cramped on this prominent plot. Thus, whilst the scheme would be faced in materials to match the host, it would fail to respect its character and appearance, and the building would appear as a dominant and discordant feature in this part of the streetscene.
8. It would thereby conflict with London Plan 2021 Policy D3 Parts D1) and D11), and Harrow Development Management Policies 2013 Policy DM 1. Amongst other things, these require a high standard of design which respects the host building, and responds positively to local character and distinctiveness and the context provided by neighbouring buildings, having regard to matters such as massing, bulk, scale, form, appearance, shape, and proportions.
9. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework requirement for high quality design which is sympathetic to the surrounding built environment; and with the advice in the Harrow Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2010 that extensions should have a sense of proportion and balance, and that they should not dominate the original building or the streetscape; and that roof alterations should complement the original street character.

Other matters

10. The appellant sets out his need to update the house and to provide space for the family to work, exercise and study from home, and a downstairs bedroom and bathroom for an elderly relative. However, I have little evidence that this is the only scheme that could meet their needs, and the harm caused would persist long after those needs have ceased to apply. This matter therefore attracts only limited weight in the overall planning balance
11. I also note the appellant's surprise at receiving a refusal of planning permission given that no response was received to emails sent to the planning officer during the Council's consideration of the application. Be that as it may, I have dealt with the scheme before me on its planning merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

12. Summing up, the scheme's largely private benefits would not outweigh the significant harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the host property and the area. Consequently, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR