



Appeal Statement

Householder Extensions
AT
Timbers, 26 Gatehill Road,
Northwood HA6 3QQ

Reference:
T-2274

Date:
10 October 2023

1. Introduction

- a. This Appeal Statement has been prepared by Just Planning on behalf of Mr & Mrs Dattani to support an appeal against the decision of London Borough of Hillingdon to refuse planning permission for extensions and alterations to Timbers, 26 Gatehill Road, in Northwood.
- b. Following a description of the site and surrounding area, the report will review the planning history, set out an overview of relevant planning policy and outline the case for the appellants.
- c. It will be demonstrated that the proposal complies with relevant local and national policies and that planning permission should therefore be granted.

2. Background

- a. On 15 June 2023, the appellants submitted a planning application to London Borough of Hillingdon for the following development (reference: 35361/APP/2023/1736):

*Erection of a front porch infill, part single storey and part double storey side and rear extension with amendments to fenestration.
Conversion of garage to habitable room.*

- b. In a decision notice dated 31 August 2023, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) advised that the application had been refused for the following reason:

1. *The proposed first floor side/rear extension, by reason of its siting on an prominent corner plot, cumulative size (when coupled with the existing extensions) and design, would result in a visually dominant and obtrusive form of development that would fail to harmonise with the architectural composition of the original host dwelling and would disrupt the established pattern of development on Gate End. Consequently, the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character, appearance and visual amenities of the host dwelling, street scene and Gatehill Farm Estate Area of Special Local Character. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies BE1 and HE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (2012), Policies DMHB 1, DMHB 5, DMHB 11, DMHB 12 and DMHD 1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two - Development Management Policies (2020), Policies HC1 and D3 of the London Plan (2021) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).*

3. Site Description

- a. The appeal property is a two-storey, detached house located on the corner of Gatehill Road and Gate End. It was constructed in the early twentieth century in the Arts and Crafts style and is red brick beneath a tiled, hipped roof.
- b. It primarily fronts Gatehill Road and is set at an angle to its neighbours and to both street frontages. It has a crossover from Gatehill Road and a rear garden running along Gate End. The boundaries are marked by dense hedging and mature trees.
- c. The house has been extended over the years – it has a single-storey garage extension, a first-floor side extension, converted former garage and dormer roof extensions. The image in figure 1, below, provides a satellite image of the property.



Figure 1: Satellite image of the appeal property.

- d. The immediate surrounding area is residential and suburban in character. It is mostly made up of large, detached houses of varying styles and on generous plots. Many have been extended and altered in various ways, contributing to a diversity in the streetscene. The area has a verdant feel with mature and well-maintained planting along street frontages.
- e. The property is not listed and is not located in a designated conservation area. It is located within the Gatehill Farm Estate, Northwood, Area of Special Local Character (ASLC).

4. Relevant Planning History & Application Proposal

- a. Permission was granted in January 2001 for the attached double garage (reference: 35361/APP/2000/1961).
- b. A first-floor side extension was approved in November 2001 (reference: 35361/APP/2001/1416). This permission was not implemented. The approval was for a much larger extension than the current proposal. The approved plans and decision notice are provided in the appendices.
- c. The current proposal is for:
 - A single-storey extension behind the garage;
 - A first-floor extension above the garage;
 - Conversion of the garage into habitable space;
 - A porch extension to infill the existing recess;
 - Various minor alterations to the elevations to accommodate new or altered openings.
- d. The ground floor extension infills an area behind the existing garage addition. The garage is also converted in habitable space with a new window in the front elevation. To preserve the appearance of the house from the street, a single garage door is retaining, serving a storage room. The extension is designed to match the existing garage and continues the roof form.
- e. Above the garage, a part-width first floor extension is added. It occupies only a part of the garage roof and is set away from the front, side and rear elevations and down from ridge of the main part of the roof. It has a hipped roof to match the existing roof and, unlike the existing roof, does not incorporate an area of crown roof.
- f. The existing are constructed in materials to match the existing house and all new openings are of a size and design to match existing.
- g. The existing house has an awkward layout with a disjointed series of relatively cramped rooms. The appeal proposal opens up the floorplan, creating larger and more modern family reception spaces on the ground floor, and enlarged, en-suite bedrooms on the first floor.

5. Planning Policy

- a. Planning law states that decisions on planning applications must be taken in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant parts of the development plan for the area are the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (2012), the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part Two - Development Management Policies (2020) and the London Plan (20210).
- b. According to the decision notice, the development fails to comply with policies BE1 and HE1 of the Strategies Policies, policies DMHB 1, DMHB 5, DMHB 11, DMHB 12 and DMHD 1 of the Development Management Policies, policies HC1 and D3 of the London Plan and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).
- c. Policy BE1 (Built Environment) of the Strategic Policies requires that all new development improve the quality of the built environment in order to create successful and sustainable neighbourhoods. Among other things, the policy states that development proposals should be sensitive to local identity, landscapes, townscapes and views, improve areas of poor environmental quality, improve the quality of the public realm, and not result in the inappropriate development of gardens and green spaces that erode the character of suburban areas.
- d. Policy HE1 (Heritage) seeks to *"conserve and enhance Hillingdon's distinct and varied environment, its settings and the wider historic landscape"*, including *"locally recognised historic features, such as Areas of Special Local Character and Locally Listed Buildings"*.
- e. Policy DMHB 1 (Heritage Assets) of the Development Management Policies requires that new development does not unacceptably harm the historic environment. Extensions must be *"designed in sympathy, without detracting from or competing with the heritage asset"*. They must be appropriate in terms of their *"siting, style, scale, massing, height, design and materials"*.
- f. Policy DMHB 11 (Design of New Development) requires that all new development exhibit a high quality of design. Development should harmonise with its surroundings in terms of its scale, size and detailed design. It should use high quality materials. It should not unacceptably harm the residential amenity of close neighbours.

- g. Policy DMHB 12 (Streets and Public Realm) relates to the public realm design and improvements and does not appear to be relevant to the application proposal, which is confined to the curtilage of the dwelling only.
- h. Policy DMHD 1 (Alterations and Extensions to Residential Dwellings) sets out criteria for extensions. It seeks to ensure that there is:

"no adverse cumulative impact of the proposal on the character, appearance or quality of the existing street or wider area"

- i. It requires that extensions are subordinate to the host dwelling *"in their floor area, width, depth and height"*. It recommends the use of matching materials. It requires that adequate garden space and parking is retained.
- j. For side extensions, it recommends that they do not exceed half the width of the original property, should be set back 1m from the front elevation and should be set in 1m from the side boundary *"in order to maintain adequate visual separation and views between houses"*.
- k. Policy D3 of the London Plan requires development to make the best use of land by following a design-led approach that optimises the capacity of sites. It requires that developments:

"enhance local context by delivering buildings and spaces that positively respond to local distinctiveness through their layout, orientation, scale, appearance and shape, with due regard to existing and emerging street hierarchy, building types, forms and proportion."

- l. Policy HC1 states that:

"Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings."

- m. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in September 2023, sets out the government's national planning policies and how these policies should be applied. It identifies a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development is sustainable when it meets the economic, social and environmental needs of a community.
- n. Chapter 11 encourages developers and local planning authorities to make the best use of land and to focus on previously developed land in sustainable locations. According to paragraph 120(d), planning decisions should:

"promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)"

- o. Paragraph 125 requires that densities be maximised, to *"ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site"*.

- p. Paragraph 126 states that:

"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities."

- q. Paragraph 130 requires that development is visually attractive and sympathetic to its surroundings and local character. Development should provide *"a high standard of amenity for existing and future users"*.

- r. Chapter 16 relates to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, including listed buildings and conservation areas. Paragraph 186 describes heritage assets as an 'irreplaceable resource' and says that they should:

"be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations."

- s. According to paragraph 203:

"The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."

6. Case for the Appellants

- a. The council does not object in principle to the appeal proposal and it does not believe that there will be any harm to living conditions at neighbouring properties. It is concerned that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and to the wider Gatehill Farm Estate Area of Special Local Character.
- b. Policy BE1 of the Strategic Policies and DMHB 11 of the Development Management Policies require that new development exhibits a high quality of design and respects and reflects the character of the surrounding area.
- c. Policy DMHD 1 provides specific guidance on the design, size and siting of residential extensions. There is no dispute between the parties that the development complies with the specific guidance in DMHD 1.
- d. Policy HE1 of the Strategic Policies and DMHB 1 of the Development Management Policies require that development does not cause harm to heritage assets. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF explains that a balanced judgement should be made when assessing proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets (such as ASLCs and locally listed buildings), taking account of the scale of the harm and the significance of the asset.
- e. According to the officer's report, the council does not object to the proposed porch extension, the ground floor rear infill extension or the garage conversion. The ground floor extension is single-storey only and a modest addition. It is also set well away from the site boundaries so that it does not appear cramped or out of place and will largely be screened from public view by the hedging along the boundary with the highway.
- f. The council's concerns relate to the design and appearance of the proposed first floor side extension. This extension has been carefully designed to respect the character and appearance of the host dwelling. As it stands, the wide side extension with its flat roof and double garage door appears incongruous, appearing as an awkward addition to the main part of the house. The replacement of the garage door with a window and a smaller garage door is an improvement. Similarly, the new first floor extension which is set back, set in and set down from the other parts of the building, improves the appearance of the house by linking the garage extension and the main house and reducing the expanse of flat roof above the garage. It also mitigates the current lop-sided effect that is created by the existing large first floor side extension to the house.
- g. The first-floor extension does not occupy the whole of the garage roof (as the 2001 approval under 35361/APP/2001/1416 (and shown in the appendices) did).

It extends across roughly half of the roof and is set back from the front and rear elevations. It has a sympathetic, hipped roof form with a ridgeline set down below the ridge over the main part of the house. Unlike the earlier extensions to the house, the extension does not have an area of flat (crown) roof. The extension will therefore appear as a subservient addition to the building and relate well to its character and proportions.

- h. The officer's report objects to the proposal in combination with the existing extensions at the house. Those extensions are lawful and do not fall to be reassessed as part of this application. The appellants' proposal improves on the existing (somewhat oversized) ground floor garage extension and first floor side extension.
- i. The case officer argues that the combination of extensions detract from the original gable-fronted, 'A'-framed design of the building, but it is the existing extensions that do so, not the new proposal.
- j. The case officer also points out that the new development will be visible from various points along Gate End. However, the proposed side elevation drawing shows that the new first floor extension will be framed by the taller and deeper existing first floor extension behind. It is not look out of place in this context.
- k. Finally, the officer's report argues that the development unacceptably projects *"beyond the side return building line with properties on Gate End"*. In fact, the Gate End building line continues for just two houses to the east of the site, before ending in the cul-de-sac. To the west, the house on the other side of the junction (number 15 Gatehill Road) is set well back from the building line and, beyond number 15, a bend in the road creates a staggered building line.
- l. In any case, the appeal property is already set at an unusual angle to the other houses around it and most of the existing house already breached the building line of the house immediately behind, as shown in the satellite image in figure 2, below.



Figure 2: The appeal property already breaches the Gate End building line.

- m. Though the council's decision suggests harm to both the character of the house and the wider ASLC, the analysis in the officer's report relates more to the former than the latter. It is not clear from the officer's report why the council believes that the development causes unacceptable harm to the non-designated heritage asset.
- n. According to the officer's report, the special character of the ASLC derives primarily from the spacing, layout and landscaping of the area. It was laid out by architect Archibald Soutar and is characterised by detached houses on generous plots with high quality landscaping and planted boundaries.
- o. The appeal proposal does not interfere with those aspects of the special character of the area. The extensions do not increase the density of development to an extent that would make the house appear oversized or harmfully reduce openness. There is little change to the overall footprint of the building (the council objects only to the first-floor element, which takes up a moderate proportion of the flat roof above the existing garage) and there is no change to the landscaping or boundary treatments.
- p. The appellants note that many of the houses in this area have been extended. For example, on 13 June 2022, the council approved extensions to 2 Gatehill Road, not far from the appeal site (reference: 10808/APP/2022/631). Like the appeal property, it is a handsome Arts and Crafts style dwelling and is located on a prominent corner plot. The approved proposal was for substantial two-

storey side and rear extensions, and the installation of AC units. The decision notice, approved plans and officer's report for this approval are provided in the appendices.

7. Conclusions

- a. The council does not object in principle to the appeal proposal and does not anticipate any harm to neighbours' living conditions. It does not object to the porch extension or garage conversion and does not express any concerns about the ground floor infill extension.
- b. It argues that the first-floor side extension, in combination with earlier extensions to the house, are excessive in size and scale and will unacceptably harm visual amenities.
- c. The previous extensions do not fall to be reassessed as part of this application. The new extension is carefully designed as a subordinate element – it is set back from the front, down from the ridge and in from the side. It sits well away from the boundary with the highway. It has a sympathetic hipped roof and omits the flat/crown roof that is a feature of the earlier extensions.
- d. In the appellants' view, the new extension improves the balance of the house by better linking the flat-roofed garage addition to the existing first floor extension attached to one side of the main 'A'-frame roof.
- e. The appellants also note that the extension is much smaller than a 2001 approval for side extension (that expired without being implemented) and less ambitious than extensions approved at nearby houses, including those approved in 2022 at 2 Gatehill Road.
- f. For these reasons, the appellants contend that the development represents sustainable development, and the inspector is respectfully requested to allow the appeal.



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