
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2023

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/D/22/3306490

41 Highfield Drive, Ickenham UB10 8AW

- 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 G Madhan against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 30871/APP/2022/1516, dated 9 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 9 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is 'single story rear extension, a first floor rear extension infilling the area to the side of the existing first floor rear addition, a roof extension with two rear dormers to provide additional second floor living accommodation and a two storey front extension.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area; and (ii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of 43 Highfield Drive with regard to outlook and light.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site includes a detached dwelling on Highfield Drive. The surrounding area is generally characterised by fairly substantial detached dwellings, some of which appear to have been significantly extended. The dwellings are positioned on relatively consistent building lines within generous plots resulting in an overall impression of spaciousness. However, the buildings themselves vary significantly in form, design, external materials and detailing which provides for a diverse street scene overall.
4. The appeal dwelling has been previously extended to the side and rear, and the Council indicates that the further rear extensions now proposed would project around 7m from the original rear building line at ground-floor level. Although it would significantly exceed the maximum depth for rear extensions specified within Policy DMHD 1 of the Local Plan Part 2 Development Management Policies 2020 ('the LPP2'), the resulting depth of the dwelling would not in itself be markedly out of keeping with other nearby buildings.
5. Nevertheless, the rear extensions would span the full width of the dwelling, and the proposal includes a crown roof with rear dormers and a large flat section

that would significantly increase the scale, mass and bulk of the upper part of the building. I observed crown roofs to many other dwellings nearby, but it appeared to me that most of the existing examples were typically of more modest dimensions, and the flat section to the appeal dwelling would certainly be one of the largest in the vicinity. While non-subordinate extensions and a change to the appearance of the dwelling would not necessarily be striking given the mixed street scene, I consider that the large upper bulk of the dwelling would give it a top-heavy appearance.

6. In addition, the proposal includes an increase in the height of the roof and eaves of the dwelling. Buildings on this part of Highfield Drive step generally down in height towards the south as land levels fall. The appellant suggests that the submitted plans show the relationship with neighbouring buildings accurately, but the outlines on the Proposed Elevations & Site Layout drawing show the eaves and roof of the existing appeal dwelling as lower than those of the neighbour at 43 Highfield Drive to the south. This is inconsistent with my observations at my visit where the eaves and roof of the appeal dwelling appeared to sit clearly above those of No 43, and as a result I am not persuaded that the illustrated relationships are representative.
7. The increases in the height of the roof and eaves of the dwelling may be fairly modest, but it seems to me that they would further increase its apparent height above No 43, and would reduce if not eliminate the existing step down in height from 39 Highfield Drive. This would disrupt the general pattern of development along this part of the street, and the height of the dwelling relative to its neighbours would draw further attention to the roof of the appeal dwelling causing it to appear conspicuous.
8. Furthermore, the relationship of the appeal dwelling with No 43 allows for simultaneous views of the ridges to the front and side of the building so that the presence and broad scale of the small existing crown roof is apparent. These views of the roof would be maintained if not increased given the greater height of the development above No 43. The bulk of the dwelling would therefore be appreciable, and while No 39 would provide some screening of the roof in views from the north, I cannot agree with the appellant that the crown roof would not be readily visible. In this respect, the proposal can be distinguished from permission granted on appeal for redevelopment of 38 Highfield Drive where the appellant has quoted sections of the decision which refer to screening of the crown roof offered by the neighbouring dwelling and existing vegetation.
9. Notwithstanding the mixed street scene and other large properties and crown roofs referred to by the appellant, I consider for these reasons that the height of the development would be somewhat jarring against the pattern of development nearby, and the dwelling would appear unduly bulky and prominent in the street scene.
10. As a consequence, I conclude that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the area. I consider that the harm would be fairly modest in the context of the diverse street scene, but the proposal would nevertheless be contrary to Policy BE1 of the Local Plan: Part 1 Strategic Policies 2012, Policies DMHB 11 and DMHD 1 of the LPP2 and Policy D3 of the London Plan 2021. Together and amongst other things, these policies broadly require high quality design that responds to and enhances local distinctiveness;

development that is sympathetic to local context; and extensions that do not adversely affect the character, appearance or quality of the area. There would also be conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) insofar as it requires well-designed places and development that is sympathetic to local character.

Living Conditions

11. At first-floor level, the proposal would result in only a fairly small increase in the depth of the closest part of the building to No 43. However, the deepest part of the dwelling currently has a hipped roof which is substantially lower than the main roof. In contrast, the crown roof now proposed would extend out over the extensions to the rear of the building, and would be of greater height than the existing main roof and taller too at the eaves. Despite the small increase in depth, there would consequently be a considerable increase in the overall bulk and mass of the development closest to No 43. The proposal also includes a single-storey element that would further increase the depth of the ground-floor level, albeit that this is of modest height at the deepest part.
12. The appellant suggests that separation between the appeal dwelling and No 43 is generous and that there is tall, dense planting along the boundary, but that was not my impression at my visit. In my judgement, the spacing between the buildings is relatively modest against even their existing scale and mass, and while I saw some planting along the boundary, vegetation closest to the rear of No 43 was not continuous and was of significantly lower height than the existing eaves. Accordingly, vegetation would offer only limited screening, particularly of the upper part of the development. In such close proximity, I consider that the depth of the building beyond the rear of No 43 in combination with the large bulk and mass of the upper part of the dwelling would result in a dominant and intrusive feature as seen from windows to the rear of this neighbour. Despite the width and length of No 43's garden, there would also be a noticeable and unwelcome increase in the degree of enclosure along the appeal site boundary. As a consequence, I find that the development would be overbearing and would result in a loss of outlook for occupiers of No 43 that would detract from their living conditions.
13. The Council's reason for refusal also refers to detriment to No 43 through loss of daylight/sunlight. However, this is not explained further within its evidence. Noting the orientation of No 43 to the south of the appeal dwelling, I am satisfied that the proposal would not cause unacceptable overshadowing or loss of sunlight. I also consider that the relationship would be unlikely to result in a significant loss of daylight so as to harm the quality of life of occupiers of this dwelling.
14. Although I have found that it would not cause a harmful loss of light, I conclude that the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the living conditions of occupiers of 43 Highfield Drive in respect of outlook. The development would therefore conflict with Policies DMHD 1 and DMHB 11 of the LPP2 which set out that development should not adversely impact on the amenity of adjacent properties and require, amongst other things, no unacceptable loss of outlook to neighbouring occupiers. It would also be contrary to the Framework which requires a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other Matters

15. During my visit, I saw mesh fencing around the frontage to No 43 and there seemed to be some works taking place internally. However, I have not been provided with details to indicate any future external alterations to this dwelling. I am therefore unable to determine that the relationship with the appeal dwelling would be altered such that the harm that I have identified above in relation to both the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions of occupiers of this neighbour would no longer occur.
16. The proposal would provide the appellant and their family with enlarged and enhanced living accommodation. However, this does not outweigh the cumulative harm that I have identified would be caused to the character and appearance of the area and to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 43.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR