



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 January 2013

by R W Grantham BSc MRSC MCIWEM

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 17 January 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/12/2187009

Antolido, Potter Street Hill, PINNER, Middlesex, HA5 3YH

- 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 A Olins against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/1564/12 was refused by notice dated 13 August 2012.
 - The development proposed is new pitched roof over existing garage for larger bedroom.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. On the appeal form, and on the Council's refusal notice, the development is described as a "first floor side extension over existing garage; raising height of part of the ridge of the existing dwellinghouse and external alterations". I have determined the appeal on this basis, as this revised description describes the proposals more accurately than the description given in the bullet points above, which is taken from the application form.

Main Issue

3. Antolido is in the Green Belt (GB), the Pinner Hill Conservation Area (CA) and the Harrow Weald Area of Special Character (ASC). The main issue raised by this appeal is whether the proposals represent inappropriate development in the GB and, if so, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances needed to justify the development.

Reasons

4. The appellant's detached house, which was formerly known as Hunters Lodge, has the appearance of an 'Arts and Crafts' building. Planning permission, for it, was granted in 1955.
5. This 2-storey building is set back behind, and to the east of, protected trees on the Potter Street Hill frontage. Following successful appeals in 2001¹, it was extended to the south to provide a 2-storey addition and a flat roofed single storey garage; thereby replacing a detached double garage which already existed here.

¹ APP/M5450/A/01/1068580 and 1069408

6. In allowing those appeals, the Inspector noted that the proposals would appear subservient to the main house and would add only limited bulk, given the existing garage and the reduced ridge height of the 2-storey element, when compared with the existing building. That element is approximately 1.5m below the main ridge. The attached garage is considerably lower.
7. In addition to providing a new front dormer, the development now proposed would raise the ridge of that 2-storey extension by about a metre and alter the form of its roof. The first floor extension, above the garage, would be almost as high and would add considerable bulk. The dwelling's footprint would remain unchanged, but its massing would be fundamentally altered and the subservience, of the southern wing, would be largely lost; thereby creating a significant imbalance in the building's appearance.
8. When taken together with earlier extensions, these proposals would result in a dwelling that is some 48% larger than the original, in terms of floor area, and about 44% larger in terms of volume. The increases are substantial, but smaller than those considered at an earlier appeal² here. In dismissing those earlier proposals, the Inspector noted that the aggregate increase in size would have been more than 50%, which he found a useful indicator and one which demonstrated that the increase would not be at all modest. He did not say that a lower increase would necessarily be acceptable; rather, he accepted that the assessment of what amounts to a disproportionate addition, in any particular case, should be based on judgement and not only on mathematical calculation.
9. In the current case, the raising of the ridge and the added bulk above the garage would occupy space which is seen to separate Antolido from Brookside, the neighbouring dwelling to the south. This loss of openness would be significant because, although this neighbouring bungalow is on lower ground, it is only a short distance away. The retention of a sense of spaciousness between these two properties was one of the considerations which led to the 2001 appeals being allowed. If the current appeal scheme were to proceed, that spaciousness would be substantially reduced.
10. I am led to conclude that, when aggregated with the past extensions, the appeal proposals would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. This would be contrary to the requirements of UDP³ Policy EP34 and the scheme would represent inappropriate development in the GB, when considered against the National Planning Policy Framework.
11. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the GB. Added to this, and contrary to CS⁴ Policy CS1.F, the loss of openness between Antolido and Brookside would erode the quality of the GB here. Harm to the GB attracts substantial weight in this appeal.
12. The CA is valued for its low density of development and for the high architectural quality of its buildings; features which also contribute to the special character of the ASC. In recognition of this, SPD⁵ seeks to protect the gaps between buildings and to ensure that material alterations to a building will protect the appearance of its elevations.

² APP/M5450/D/12/2169866

³ Harrow Unitary Development Plan 2004

⁴ Harrow Core Strategy 2012

⁵ Supplementary Planning Document, Pinner Conservation Areas (2009)

13. As outlined above, however, the alterations here would disrupt the architectural balance of the appellant's house. A 'terracing' effect would be introduced. The southern extension, overall, would compete with the design of the original building and the roof's appearance would become confused; the impact of which would be aggravated by an eyebrow dormer window squeezed in above the garage. This would be contrary to the principles of good design as required by UDP Policies D4 and D15, and as described in Council guidance⁶.
14. The proposed changes would reduce the space between the main bulk of Antolido, and Brookside, and the relationship between these two buildings. As things stand, the height of Antolido's roof falls in significant steps from the main ridge down to the subservient 2-storey extension and thence to the flat roofed garage; beyond which the land remains level for a few metres before sloping steeply down towards Brookside. This gradation of roof height, which is complemented by the slopes of its hipped ends, respects the topography and the design of the original building on the appeal site. The current proposals do not and, to that extent, they fail to satisfy LP⁷ Policy 7.4.B.
15. In design terms, the flat roof of the garage sits a little uncomfortably alongside the pitched roofs which cover other parts of the building. Its replacement would therefore moderate the harm that the scheme would otherwise cause to the character and appearance of the area, but this does not warrant the height, bulk and complexity of alterations that are now proposed. Notwithstanding the lack of pavement, on Potter Street Hill, these works would affect a first floor part of the building which is at the head of the short driveway that leads straight up from the road. On that basis, it would be relatively prominent in the views of passers-by, particularly when the frontage trees are not in leaf.
16. The window design and external materials, to be used in the development, would match the existing building. But, as I have explained, the scale of the southern wing, following these works, would be inappropriate. The appeal scheme would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA and ASC, even though the harm caused would be limited by the loss of the garage's flat roof. There would be conflict, in this respect, with CS Policies CS1.D and CS6.A, with UDP Policies D15.E and EP31, and with LP Policy 7.8.D.
17. In terms set out by the Framework, the harm to the significance of the (CA) designated heritage asset would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, it both adds to my concerns regarding harm to the GB and would not be outweighed by the benefits of replacing the garage's flat roof.
18. I am led to conclude that the other considerations in this case are not sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm that the development would cause to the GB, to the CA and to the ASC. The very special circumstances needed to justify the development therefore do not exist and the proposals run contrary to LP Policy 7.16.B and to the Framework's recent (2012) expression of government policy.
19. I have taken account of all other matters raised but, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Grantham

INSPECTOR

⁶ Harrow Residential Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

⁷ The London Plan (2011)