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2020/4908/P	A J Kelly	28/12/2020 12:57:48	OBJNOT	COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATION 2020/4908/P

Before commenting on the detail of this application, I must reflect on the fact that this application is the sixth application to extend the current, half built, extension at number 3 Hillfield Road in just over a year. A prior permission application was also refused and the applicant has lodged an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate in relation to this decision.

Last year, previous applications 2019/4621/P and 2019/4710/P were refused by the planning authority. This year application 2020/3034/P, application 2020/4603/P and application 2020/4971/P have also, quite properly, been refused.

Instead of accepting these decisions, the applicant has chosen to re-apply yet again and this application continues to pursue the idea of extending the half-built extension at number 3 but also proposes building an extension to number 5 which is extremely concerning. However, at least the applicant has now come out of the closet and owned up to his interest in number 5 rather than seeking to obscure this by getting his partner to comment favourably on applications in relation to number 3, her future home.

Aside from the planning reasons for objecting to this application, I am additionally concerned that, given the applicant's apparent obsession with further development of the side return at number 3, he is simply using this application as a device to circumvent the previous decisions and has no intention of building both extensions, were he to get approval. Otherwise why submit applications in relation to two separate properties in different legal ownership as part of one application? Also why propose incurring extensive expenditure on extending number 5 (on which there is a sizeable mortgage), when it would take decades to recover the cost in additional rent? It does not make commercial sense.

The Design and Access Statement says that "the proposed extension" (sic, I assume this should be be extensions unless it is proposed to join the two buildings which would be of great concern and should be clarified) "would preserve the character and appearance of the neighbourhood and would not result in a significant impact upon levels of amenity enjoyed within residential neighbourhood properties." It goes on to say that "the scale and design of the proposed extension" (again I assume that this should be plural) is subservient to the host buildings."

This is disingenuous and the reasons for refusing the previous applications must also apply with equal force to this one.

Extending these properties in the way the applicant intends would be overdevelopment. It would be garden grabbing and and result in two unsightly structures not in keeping with the character of the property or the neighbourhood. It would detrimentally affect neighbouring properties both because of its visual impact and the consequential loss of amenity.

Overdevelopment

The half built extension at number 3 already over-develops the site and takes the property boundary out way past the boundaries of the other properties in the terrace. This fresh application seems to be a further hybrid between 2019/4621/P and 2019/4710 which were both refused. Whilst it does not completely square this construction off, it does build to the boundary wall by taking up the side return and also building beyond.

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The current length of the two reception rooms of the houses in this terrace is c.9.4M from the front bay to the beginning of the side return. The original rear addition is c.7.25M. Mr Sebba is already building out a further 6M at number 3 and this proposal increases that extension by building out from the side return towards that 6m boundary, thus subverting the original Victorian design. As such, it is hardly "subservient to the host building" as the Design and Access Statement asserts. It will further destroy a pretty Victorian terraced house.

The proposal for number 5 compounds the overdevelopment as not only is the side return to be filled in but the proposal is then to build out further. Again, given the size of this two bedroom flat, this can hardly be subservient to the host building.

The D&AS refers to an imaginary 'new family' for number 5 to enjoy the garden. The reality is that this property has been purchased by a property management company which rents out properties. It is by no means certain that any tenants will be a family as opposed to a flat share. That must be the reason for wishing to change the garden access arrangements which, to my knowledge, have not caused a problem for residents over more than 35 years. If the garden access arrangements are a problem, the most obvious solution would be to restore the original French windows which would involve minimal disruption and cost and be in keeping with the character of the property.

Design and the effect on the character of the building / neighbourhood

The original design of the properties is the same as others in Hillfield Road. They are typical late Victorian terraced houses with adjoining side returns which enhance the appearance of the property and also provide much needed space between each property This mirror image layout is normal in Victorian terraces and part of the distinctive character

The proposed extensions are not in keeping with the original Victorian design and will be unsightly. As both will be built to the boundary fence/wall, they will simply create an unsightly box or boxes stuck on to the original Victorian properties and totally at odds with their late Victorian architecture and the architecture of the other properties in the road.

In addition, it is also of concern that the extension appears to raise the height of the existing ground floor up to the height of the bay window on the first floor. Surely this cannot be acceptable? This underlines the unsuitability of these properties for this sort of extension. The ceiling heights in the back parts of the houses are much lower than in the front part.

The application is misleading in that the D&AS implies that only the side returns will be developed whereas it is clear from the new plans that this is not the case. The plan is to build further out, albeit not 4m as was the case with 2020/4971/P.

I am assuming that the reference to "current side extension" is to the original design of the properties which involves creating a side return. Far from not serving "a useful purpose", they serve a very useful purpose (mine houses the kitchen) and, as I have already said, are integral to the character of the properties.

The design of the new ground floor flat at number 5 is also unsatisfactory. It involves the construction of a light well as otherwise there would be no natural light to the second bedroom which currently has a window onto the

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garden.

The D&AS says that the extensions will be built with aluminium glazing which is most definitely not evidence of their having been “designed sympathetically with the existing building to blend with the current architectural character of the existing building”, as it asserts. The original design of these houses involves wooden glazing including sash windows and French windows.

Adverse effect on the amenity of neighbours

These extensions need to be seen in the context of other extensions to number 3 and therefore the effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties needs to be considered in that context. Amenity has already been lost and any additional development will diminish it further and have an increased adverse impact.

The proposed extensions will fill the side returns and beyond and so impact on neighbouring properties, including the upper floor flats at number 5. The D&AS asserts that the proposed “extension will have no impact to the neighbours as it is an infill extension”. The plans make it clear that the extensions are more than just filling in the side returns so this is obviously incorrect.

In particular, it will adversely affect the amenity of my property - number 7. Its amenity has already been affected by the works to number 3 and further development will clearly make this worse.

Building an extension to number 5 which will extend into the current garden will inevitably involve additional noise. This has been problem in the past with the current lay out and will obviously be exacerbated by the fact that the living accommodation is to be moved from the front of the flat to the back with bifold doors which are likely to be left open for ventilation.

As this extension builds out beyond the current boundary it will cause loss of daylight to the part of our garden that we use for sitting out. This will be completely overshadowed by the new extension. There will also inevitably be overlooking. Our privacy will be greatly reduced. I am also concerned about the effect the excavations will have on the stability of my property and garden wall.

Visual impact

Adding a large box onto the rears of the two properties is going to result in an unsightly construction, particularly as it will so so at odds with the original Victorian design.

Contrary to what the Design and Access statement seeks to assert, the “extension” (sic but surely this must be “extensions”?) will not be be “hardly visible”. The half built extension to number 3 is already very visible to neighbouring properties and therefore two larger extension at number 3 and 5 will be even more visible. The sloping nature of the gardens, which is prayed in aid as a mitigating factor, actually exacerbates this.

In addition, it will be very visible from the upper floors of neighbouring properties as well as the upper floors of number 5.

The D&AS considers the issue of visual impact only in relation to adjoining properties. It needs also to be considered in relation to South Mansions which is sited to the rear of number 1-9 Hillfield Road.

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The applicant has relied upon the GDO to begin to build an extension in the side return and the design is ugly and obtrusive, as his half built extension to the rear boundary to the original property. Extending this further into the whole side return and mirroring it at number 5 means the visual impact would be even worse.

Finally, while I appreciate that the detrimental affect of the works is not a material consideration, you should be aware that the owner has a track record going back over 13 years of starting and not completing works at number 3 and number 2 Hillfield Road.

Works at number 3 started over 5 years ago and are still uncompleted. Works have already started at number 5. It seems likely that if this application is granted further works will be begun and then left undone for an extended period causing more rats and an unsightly vista. He only seems to employ five or six people which seems to be one of the reasons work does not proceed to completion.

He has a real talent for turning perfectly habitable houses into derelict sites. Number 5 is just the next victim.

The adverse impact on the quality of life of the residents of the cul-de-sac cannot be over-emphasised. It seems nonsensical to have to consider planning applications from someone who has amply demonstrated an inability to finish any alterations whatsoever.

I would hope that the Planning Authority would simply refuse this application as it did the previous 5. The reasons for refusal must apply with equal force. It did not have a choice in relation to the permitted development but, here there is a choice. The monstrosity should just be refused.

A J Kelly
