

OFFICER REPORT FOR DECISION UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

APPLICATION NO: P1790.21

WARD : Squirrels Heath

Date Received: 13th September 2021

ADDRESS: 15 CROSSWAYS
ROMFORD

PROPOSAL: Reduction in length of front garden wall and removal of soft landscaping from driveway substituted by resin driveway

DRAWING NO(S): 2034/10 Rev 02
2034/01

RECOMMENDATION : It is recommended that **planning permission be REFUSED** for the reason(s) given at the end of the report

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a detached residential property, located in the Gidea Park Conservation Area. The application premises whilst forming part of the Exhibition estate is not an Exhibition House. The site is also not listed.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

Consent is sought for alterations to the existing driveway and associated landscaping works. Proposals comprise of the removal of an area of planting to the left hand side when viewed from the street and the replacement of existing hard-landscaped areas with a resin bound finish. The boundary wall would be reduced in length and areas of planting at the borders would be retained. The application mirrors the earlier submission under ref P0257.21 which was refused for the following reason:

The extended area of hard surfacing by reason of its overall expanse, combined with the loss of soft landscaping, would set an undesirable precedent, detrimental to the open and verdant character of the Gidea Park Conservation Area. The proposal would neither preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Gidea Park Conservation Area contrary to Policies DC61 and DC68 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document, the Heritage SPD and the guidance contained within the NPPF.

An appeal was made to the Planning Inspectorate but lapsed. Consequently the applicant as resubmitted the application with an accompanying statement seeking to justify the proposals. The statement reasons that the works are required to improve surface water drainage and increase/improve parking provision. The applicant also cites a number of existing developments within the vicinity with front gardens that have been paved over.

Exact specification, method of installation and finish of the driveway has not been provided at this stage.

RELEVANT HISTORY

CONSULTATIONS/REPRESENTATIONS

Neighbouring properties were consulted through direct notification, in addition to this a site notice was displayed adjacent to the site by officers and the application was advertised in the local press. No letters of representation were received.

In addition the following comments have been made by other stakeholders:

Gidea Park Civic Society - Objection
Council Heritage Advisor - Objection

RELEVANT POLICIES

LDF

CP17 - Design
CP18 - Heritage
DC61 - Urban Design
DC67 - Buildings of Heritage Interest
DC68 - Conservation Areas
SPD2 - Heritage SPD

OTHER

LONDON PLAN - 7.4 - Local character
LONDON PLAN - 7.8 - Heritage assets and archaeology
NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

MAYORAL CIL IMPLICATIONS

The application is not liable for Mayoral CIL.

STAFF COMMENTS

The main issues in this case are the impact of the proposal on the streetscene including the Gidea Park Conservation Area, the impact on neighbouring amenity and any highway and parking issues.

DESIGN/IMPACT ON STREET/GARDEN SCENE

The application site is located within the Gidea Park Conservation Area which is characterised by individually designed early 20th century houses influenced by the arts and crafts movement. The Conservation Area contains housing and shops built around a road layout dating from 1910 based on the garden suburb principles and featuring two areas of architectural exhibition and competition housing. The character of the residential parts of the Conservation Area is one of individually designed dwellings in mature gardens. Nearly all of the houses are detached and the roads are spacious and generous; the variety of designs and the mature planting in streets, gardens and open spaces contributes to a residential environment of high quality and unique character. The mature gardens, trees and boundary hedges form an integral part of the character of the Gidea Park Conservation Area.

The statutory duty applied to Local Planning Authorities in the exercise of their planning functions in conservation areas is set out in section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This is that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. This is reflected in LDF Policy DC68 which states that planning permission for development within a Conservation Area will only be granted where it preserves or enhances the character of the area.

The layout of the site presently features a generous amount of hard-landscaping, certainly more than half the frontage. The retained area of planting, whilst proportionally less than what can be observed elsewhere within the Conservation Area offsets this somewhat and softens the appearance of the premises when viewed from the street. Whilst a relatively small area, the visual contribution in the opinion of officers is significant in reflecting the garden suburb

principles. The current proposals would seek to replace the existing block paving with a resin finish, the exact method of installation has not been made clear in the current submission (detail could be secured by condition in the event of approval). Whilst the use of permeable resin bound driveways is not objectionable in principle and has been supported elsewhere (subject to details of finish) and appropriateness, in this instance the ratio of hard-to soft landscaping would be reduced significantly over the existing in so far as that virtually the whole frontage would be devoid of any areas of planting. Furthermore, it has not been evidenced that a resin finish would be characteristic of the immediate street-scene.

The Council previously had a long standing guideline within Gidea Park whereby only applications that amounted to 50% or less of the front garden being hard surfaced are permitted. Generally this principle is applied as it is representative of the garden suburb principles. The arrangement as existing would exceed that 50% threshold currently, however the proposals would entirely transform the appearance of the site from the road. There would appear to be little justification for the removal of the area of planting to the left hand side of the driveway when viewing the site from the street, given that two vehicle spaces are shown as being achievable on existing drawings. Where similar such ratios of hard-to-soft landscaping have been achieved there are few examples where formal planning permission has been obtained as the objective of the Council is to maintain the verdant character of the area.

In any event the presence of other historic driveways where planting and areas of soft landscaping have been removed are examples of how unsympathetic development can transform sensitive settings. Where such development has been undertaken, it is not representative of the wider Conservation Area setting where such arrangements are routinely resisted and dismissed at appeal. They do not, in the view of staff, represent adequate justification for a further unsympathetic development which would detract from the special character of the Conservation Area. To this end, staff are of the view that the development would be harmful visually to the character of the area and would represent an erosion of the characteristics which typify it.

This application follows an earlier decision to refuse permission as indicated earlier within this report under ref: P0256.21. The applicant has not revised the scheme and has sought to provide a statement to justify the proposals. Having reviewed the content of the submission, the rationale by the applicant indicates that the works are required to address flooding issues, provide additional parking for the homeowner. These are not considered by officers to outweigh the harm identified to the street-scene and character of the Conservation Area. Flooding could be addressed through other works/landscaping. The plans show provision for 3 parking spaces, an increase from the current 2. The site has a relatively good PTAL of 3 with London Plan parking standards for new development setting a maximum parking standard of 1 space per dwelling. There is therefore no justification for greater parking provision. Parking for the existing two spaces could be achieved without loss of the vast majority of soft landscaped areas.

At its core the fundamental requirement of Policy DC68 is for officers to determine whether development would preserve or enhance the character of the area. Cumulatively the alterations to the front of the site are considered to be unacceptable. This view is reinforced by an objection that has been made by the Council's heritage advisor who reasons that the proposals would result in an unusually wide driveway which would be incongruous to the street-scape.

IMPACT ON AMENITY

There would be no harm to neighbouring amenity due to type of development proposed.

HIGHWAY/PARKING

The proposal would not give rise to any highway/parking issues.

KEY ISSUES/CONCLUSIONS

The proposal does not raise any adverse issues in respect of neighbouring residential amenities, or on any highways/parking grounds.

It is judged however that the extent of hard-surfacing in conjunction with the removal of areas of planting which could have otherwise offset the proposals would result in a frontage that would be dominated by hard-surfacing, to the detriment of local character. The scheme put forward for consideration, as submitted, would detract from the green verdant character of the area, to the detriment of the special character and appearance of the Gidea Park Conservation Area, thus contrary to Policy DC68.

Having regard to the supporting statement provided the content does not outweigh the harm identified and consequently there is no compelling reasons to depart from earlier views. Having had regard to all relevant planning policy and other material planning considerations, the proposal is deemed harmful to the Gidea Park Conservation Area and REFUSAL is recommended accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

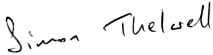
It is recommended that **planning permission be REFUSED** for the following reason(s):

1. Reason for refusal - Conservation Areas

The extended area of hard surfacing by reason of its overall expanse, combined with the loss of soft landscaping, would set an undesirable precedent, detrimental to the open and verdant character of the Gidea Park Conservation Area. The proposal would neither preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Gidea Park Conservation Area contrary to Policies DC61 and DC68 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document, the Heritage SPD and the guidance contained within the NPPF.

1 Refusal - No negotiation

Statement Required by Article 35 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015: Consideration was given to seeking amendments, but given conflict with adopted planning policy, notification of intended refusal and the reason(s) for it was given to the agent in writing 10-11-2021

Authorising Officer:	Simon Thelwell		10-11-2021
Authorising Officer:	Simon Thelwell		10-11-2021