
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October 2016

by Helen Hockenhull BA(Hons) B.PI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 19 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/P5870/W/16/3153901

Seaton House School, 67 Banstead Road South, Sutton SM2 5LH

- 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 Mrs Judith Evans against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Sutton.
 - The application Ref B2016/73424/FUL, dated 2 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is an internal rebuild inside the existing external footprint with a new gable end on the south side to match existing and single storey extension on the south side.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Seaton House School building the subject of this appeal is currently occupied by the school on the ground floor and by the Carshalton Beeches Bowling Club on the first floor. The Bowling Club would be required to relocate to new premises if the development at the school were to proceed. It has been brought to my attention by the Council and the appellant that when the original planning application for works to the school was submitted, it was accompanied by a separate application for a new Club House for the Bowling Club. This application was also refused and is the subject of a separate appeal. The parties have suggested that these developments should be considered together as linked appeals. However whilst the two proposals may be linked in terms of implementation, they are independent developments and the appeals can therefore be considered separately.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are:
 - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area;
 - the effect of the development on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring dwellings with particular regard to privacy.
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Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Seaton House School occupies a split site, the main school building being at 67 Banstead Road South. The building the subject of this appeal is located to the rear of Nos 63 and 65 Banstead Road South. It lies at the northern most end of an area of backland which also accommodates the Carshalton Beeches Bowling Green and the school playing fields. There is a difference in level with the ground floor of the building being set lower than the bowling green.
5. The area is residential in character. Properties are generally two storey hipped roof dwellings with front gables and porches set in large plots with good size rear gardens and mature landscaping. They are faced in both brick and render with rosemary tiled roofs. The school building itself has a chalet style pavilion design with low eaves, dormer windows and a gable end feature. It is unique in that it does not reflect the character or appearance of the surrounding built form.
6. It is proposed to demolish the existing school building and rebuild it with an altered roofline and single storey extension with front gable features. The building would be two storey in height with additional teaching accommodation in the roof space. It would have a low eaves and long sloping roof with dormers in the north and south facing roof slopes and rooflights to the north, west and east elevations. Due to the level differences the building would be positioned around 0.8 metres below the level of the bowling green with an overall height of about 9.7 metres to the ridge and 4.4 metres to the eaves.
7. The overall height of the building would be no greater than that of the existing structure but the volume of the building would be increased by around 20 %. Whilst the replacement building would have a greater bulk and mass, particularly at first floor to the rear and western end of the building, the lower floor level and the low sloping roof assist to reduce the mass and bulk of the development in visual terms.
8. The appeal proposal would be of a different design to buildings in the vicinity. I noted on my site visit that the existing building also has a contrasting architectural style. Having regard to the developments stand-alone location I do not consider that in terms of design it would cause harm to the character of the area. The development would have the appearance of a three storey building. I accept that this would not be in keeping with the built form of the surrounding area. However the appeal proposal would be in a unique position to the rear of existing residential properties with no road frontage. Due to the ground floor being set at a lower level, the three storey nature of the building would not be fully appreciated even when viewed from the southern elevation facing the bowling green.
9. I acknowledge that the proposal would be visible from Banstead Road South when looking down the access road. Whilst the design of the building would not be in keeping with the design and appearance of the residential properties in the locality, it would be well set back from the road frontage and only a part of the sloping roof to the west elevation would be viewed. I therefore

consider that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the street scene.

10. In terms of footprint the proposal would result in a very small increase of around 18 sq metres, the new building being just over 424 sq metres. The proposed building would therefore occupy very little additional floorspace and would not have any material impact on the open character of this backland site. The Council have commented that the school building together with the proposed new club house for the Bowling Club would cumulatively break up the openness of the backland site. However this appeal relates to the school building alone, the new club house being the subject of a separate appeal. This is therefore not a matter relevant to the appeal before me and it is not necessary for me to consider this further.
11. In conclusion, I consider that the appeal proposal would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development would comply with Policy BP12 of the Core Planning Strategy 2009 and Policy DM1 of the Site Development Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) 2012. These policies aim to achieve good urban design and ensure new development maintains and enhances the local character and appearance.

Living conditions

12. The appeal proposal is bounded by residential properties on three sides. Properties on Westway lie approximately 30 metres from the rear of the appeal site. There are mature trees and vegetation along this boundary. The northern elevation of the proposed building adjacent to the rear garden boundary of these properties would have rooflights at first floor serving classrooms and the staff room. It would also have two dormer windows providing light to the Arts and Science areas. The rooflights, bearing in mind their position, angle and height would not result in any overlooking to the neighbouring properties. However I consider that the two dormers would be of such a height above the existing vegetation and trees that they would result in loss of privacy to the rear gardens of the properties on Westway.
13. The eastern elevation of the proposed building would have rooflights serving classroom areas at first floor level. Residential properties on Southway are positioned around 50 metres from the appeal site and there is an existing high conifer hedge on this boundary. Having regard to the position, angle of view and height of the rooflights, together with the existing vegetation on the eastern boundary, I consider that there would be no loss of privacy to the occupants of the neighbouring properties on Southway.
14. The western elevation of the proposed building would have rooflights at first floor serving classrooms, the open resource area and the Arts area. Neighbouring houses on Banstead Road South are sited approximately 20 metres from the appeal building. As a result of the position, height and angle of the rooflights, I consider that there would be no loss of privacy to neighbouring residential properties adjoining this site boundary.
15. In conclusion I consider that whilst there would be no loss of privacy for the occupants of neighbouring properties on Banstead Road South or Southway, there would be overlooking for the occupiers of residential dwellings on Westway. The development would result in a loss of privacy causing harm to

their living conditions and would therefore conflict with Policy DM2 of the Site Development Policies DPD. This policy seeks to protect the amenities of those occupying adjoining properties.

Other matters

16. I acknowledge that the development proposed would improve the facilities at the School and increase teaching and storage space. I also note there are no highway objections to the proposal. In addition I acknowledge that the building would be constructed in an energy efficient and sustainable way with the provision of photovoltaic cells on the western roof slope and that there are no biodiversity concerns. Whilst these factors provide support to the proposal they do not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
17. I note that a number of local residents have raised concern that the school would be increasing the number of pupils if the development proceeds, leading to further noise, parking and traffic issues. The appellant has advised that this is not the intention. These matters do not lead me to any different conclusions having identified harm in respect of the second main issue.

Conclusion

18. I consider that the appeal proposal would cause harm to the living conditions of neighbouring properties on Westway with regard to loss of privacy.
19. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I dismiss this appeal.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR