
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

by Philip Lewis BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 06 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/16/3157186

7, 8, 9 Verona Court, Chiswick, London W4 2JD

- 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 Esme Fisher against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00249/7-9/P1, dated 13 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 18 July 2016.
 - The development proposed was originally described as *'the proposal seeks to convert the existing loft space into a habitable space by the addition of a proposed mansard loft conversion over existing roof with 2 roof lights on slope roof. The proposal is designed in keeping with the existing surroundings and would not cause any significant impact on rear elevations of the houses and its impact from the street is minimal. The proposed Mansard would also still make the loft sub-servient with the original roof of the house and still be in character of the existing style and design of the properties and its surroundings'*.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The appellant has confirmed that one of the plans submitted with the appeal (proposed side elevation LW201600027 10) has an error and has provided confirmation as to the appearance of that side elevation. I am satisfied that the appellant has replaced an incorrect drawing rather than amended the proposal and therefore as the development has not changed, prejudice to the interests of interested parties would not occur if I consider the appeal on this basis. Whilst I note the additional names listed in the appeal form, the name of the applicant as set out on application form is Esme Fisher and the appeal has proceeded on that basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue for the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the Chiswick High Road Conservation Area and the Grade II listed building, 2 Chiswick Lane.

Reasons

4. The appeal proposal relates to three, two storey terraced dwellings situated within Verona Court. The dwellings are constructed in brick and have pitched slate roofs with parapets to each gable end. The properties at Verona Court are arranged around the access road which leads off Chiswick Lane.
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5. The appeal properties back onto Cranbrook Road, from where the first floors and the roofs are visible above the boundary wall. The appeal site adjoins the Chiswick High Road Conservation Area and is visible from within the Conservation Area, particularly when looking from the Chiswick High Road along Cranbrook Road. The appeal proposal involves the development of mansard roof extensions to the rear of the appeal properties and the insertion of two rooflights into the front roof slope of each dwelling.
6. I saw at my site visit that the appeal properties appear prominent when viewed from within the Conservation Area on Chiswick High Road, from where they act to close the view out of the Conservation Area, along Cranbrook Road. The introduction of the mansard roof extensions, with their Juliet balconies and additional windows, despite the height of the buildings being unchanged, would serve to significantly increase the appearance of bulk of the appeal properties and introduce uncharacteristic features into a prominent location in the street scene. Due to the mansard roof extensions taking up the whole of the depth of the roofs, the extensions would not appear subservient to the host properties. Consequently, despite the use of traditional materials, the proposed mansard roof alterations would give rise to harm the appearance of the existing buildings and the street scene and have an adverse effect upon the setting of the Conservation Area.
7. The proposed rooflights would be relatively large and would be situated high within the roof plane. They would appear as prominent additions to the front elevations of the dwellings and would detract from the appearance of the group of buildings. Given the location of the appeal proposal in relation to the Grade II listed 2 Chiswick Lane and the scope of the proposal, I consider that the proposal would give rise to a neutral effect upon the setting of the listed building and therefore not harm its setting.
8. I have considered the comments by the appellant regarding the variety in the type and design of loft extensions in the area and saw during my site visit examples of such developments including box type dormers and mansard roofs on properties on other parts of Cranbrook Road. I also noted the loft conversions visible on and from Chiswick High Road as referred to me by the appellant. I have not however been provided with details of the specific developments and whilst I acknowledge the variety in loft extensions in the area, I cannot determine whether the circumstances of particular developments are similar to that before me. Furthermore, I do not consider that such developments provide examples which should inevitably be followed, given the harm found in this particular case.
9. Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets. This is in line with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in respect of development affecting conservation areas, which states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. Paragraph 132 of the Framework sets out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the conservation of the asset and sets out that significance can be harmed or lost through development within its setting.

10. Paragraph 126 of the Framework recognises that historic assets are an irreplaceable resource that local authorities should conserve in a manner appropriate to their significance. The harm found in this case would be less than substantial to the Conservation Area as a whole and any harm, which is less than substantial, must be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal. Whilst the harm to an individual site may be less than substantial, the incremental and cumulative harm that could arise from similar proposals could adversely affect the Conservation Area and the heritage asset as a whole. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm requires clear and convincing justification. However, in this case the alterations relate to private dwellings and there are no public benefits demonstrated that would offset the limited harm identified.
11. The proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and setting of the Chiswick High Road Conservation Area. The appeal proposal is contrary to London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan (Local Plan) Policy CC1 which includes that development is expected to have regard to urban context and character, Local Plan Policy CC2 which is concerned with urban design and architecture and includes that development should respond meaningfully and sensitively to the site, its characteristics and constraints and Local Plan Policy CC4 which is concerned with heritage and includes that development proposals should conserve and take opportunities to enhance any heritage asset and its setting in a manner appropriate to its significance.

Other matters

12. I have considered that the appeal properties are limited in space and that the proposal would address this, providing additional bedrooms and shower rooms. I also note the comments regarding sustainability and the energy efficiency of the buildings. However, these matters do not lead me to a different conclusion.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above and having considered all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Philip Lewis

INSPECTOR