
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 November 2016

by Jason Whitfield BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21st December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/16/3157853

The Mercure London Greenwich Hotel, Catherine Grove, Greenwich, London SE10 8FR

- 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 Periquin Ltd against the decision of Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 15/3775/F, dated 4 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 2 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is a single storey roof extension on the second floor to the front, and minor internal layout alterations to provide an additional two hotel rooms.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey roof extension on the second floor to the front, and minor internal layout alterations to provide an additional two hotel rooms at The Mercure London Greenwich Hotel, Catherine Grove, Greenwich, London SE10 8FR in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 15/3775/F, dated 2 March 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: A2164-8000 P1, A2164-8001 P1, A2164-8002 P1, A2164-8003 P1, A2164-8013 P1, A2164-8014 P1, A2164-8021 P1, A2164-8022 P1, A2164-8023 P1, A2164-8213 P1 and A2164-8214 P1.
 - 3) No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Procedural Matter

2. Additional plans have been provided in support of the appeal. The plans provide visual renders for illustrative purposes and do not alter the proposed scheme. I do not believe any party would be unfairly prejudiced by my having regard to the additional plans. I have determined the appeal on that basis.
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Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ashburnham Triangle Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The Ashburnham Triangle Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2008 (CAA) identifies the area as consisting of three busy main roads enclosing a quiet, predominantly residential area. Development has evolved gradually since 1575 and is varied and organic. Surviving buildings date from the first years of the 18th century. The buildings are Georgian and mid-Victorian housing, built of yellow London stock brick with slate roofs. Earlier housing is generally smaller in scale. Its significance largely derives from the legibility and identity of the Triangle itself, as well as the varied character of the three boundary streets along with the survival of early 19th century buildings which are of modest character and of some historical value.
5. The appeal property is a 9 storey building, originally erected in the 1930's. It is located within Catherine Grove which the CAA identifies as containing the only public open space in the area. The CAA indicates Catherine Grove is predominately residential in land use and the building quality is varied. There are no listed buildings within the grove, though the CAA identifies several locally listed buildings. It also indicates that there is a landmark building within the grove in the former of the former nurses home. Whilst a particularly prominent feature, the Neo-Georgian architecture of the appeal property unmistakably dates from the 20th century. It markedly contrasts with the older, more modest buildings which characterise the area.
6. It is proposed to erect a single storey extension at second floor level on the elevation of the building facing Catherine Grove. The Council considers that the proposed extension would fail to respect the scale of the host building and would result in a cluttered appearance which would dominate the character of the host building. The proposal would comprise a single storey extension located on the second floor of a 10 storey building. The footprint of the extension would be around 94.6sqm – smaller than the existing entrance portico and a considerably low proportion of the overall building. Moreover, it would be set back from the front of the property and would sit inside the existing parapet. The extension would not increase the existing envelope of the building. As a result, when considered in the context of what is a substantial building, the scale of extension is such that it would appear as a subservient addition and would not over dominate the host building.
7. Whilst the use of a glazed curtain wall system would be a notably contemporary approach, it would reflect the existing extensions on the property. The existing extensions on the property are good examples of sensitive, modern intervention on historical properties. I see no reason why the appeal proposal would be any different. Indeed, the proposal would appear particularly lightweight when read against the solidity of the hotel's built form.
8. Given its height, there is no doubt the building is visible from several vantage points within the wider public realm. Nevertheless, due to its location on the front of the property at second floor level, viewpoints of the proposed extension would be significantly restricted. There are buildings of varying heights nearby and these, along with the dense cover of mature trees, would

largely screen the extension from all but a limited aspect of Catherine Grove to the front of the hotel and slight views from the rear.

9. Moreover, the ability to read the proposal within the context of the existing extensions would be further limited. The cumulative effect of the proposal and the roof extensions would be limited by the disparity in their heights and the context of the scale and massing of the original building. Opportunities to see the proposal in the same view as the extension to the rear would be restricted to glimpses from Greenwich High Road. Indeed, there is distinct symmetry in the front and rear facades of the building. The proposal would similarly reflect the size, location, design and massing of the existing extension to the rear and would, therefore, provide a notable sense of balance in the building's appearance. Consequently, I do not agree that the proposal would result in the host building portraying a cluttered appearance.
10. I conclude, therefore, that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Ashburnham Triangle Conservation Area. Consequently, the proposal would accord with Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan¹ which seek to ensure a high quality design which conserves the significance of heritage assets. It would also accord with Policies DH1, DH3 and DH(h) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan Core Strategy with Detailed Policies 2014 which expect developments to have a positive relationship with the existing context and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Other Matters

11. I note concerns raised by neighbouring residents with respect to the effect of the proposal on their living conditions with regard to privacy and daylight, in particular those occupiers within Catherine Grove, Burgos Grove and within The Charter Buildings and The Toolworks. However, I consider that given the existing inter-visibility between the surrounding properties and the hotel, as well as the intervening distances between those properties and the proposal, the scheme would not have any particularly harmful effect on the privacy of those residents. Moreover, given the scale, orientation, massing and translucent nature of the proposal, it would not give rise to any significant loss of light for neighbouring residents.
12. Given the scale of the proposal in contrast to that of the hotel, it is unlikely that the proposal would give rise to such an increase in comings and goings that would be harmful to neighbouring residents in terms of noise and disturbance.

Conditions

13. In addition to the standard time limit condition, a condition requiring compliance with the approved plans is necessary to provide certainty. A condition relating to materials is also necessary in to preserve the character and appearance of the Ashburnham Triangle Conservation Area.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, and having considered all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Jason Whitfield

INSPECTOR

¹ The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations Since 2011, 2016