The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 December 2016

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 3 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/D/16/3160476
32 Spenser Road, London SE24 0NR

- 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 Mr Lawrence McDonnell against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
- The application Ref 16/03588/FUL was refused by notice dated 9 August 2016.
- The development proposed is the construction of a new front dormer window.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. I have dealt with another appeal[1] on this site. That appeal is the subject of a separate decision.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is two-storey house of traditional style in a terrace of six similar properties with broadly symmetrical and detailed period frontages within the Poets Corner Conservation Area (CA). The CA is predominantly residential in character. Its significance as a designated heritage asset is mainly derived from the architectural quality, symmetry and coherence of the semi-detached villas and terraces that form well-mannered streetscapes. In that context, No 32 and the wider terrace positively contributes to the character and appearance of the CA.

5. I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, as required by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. I have also given great weight to the conservation of the CA, as a heritage asset, in the light of paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

[1] Ref APP/N5660/D/16/3160475

6. The proposal is to replace the dormer on the front roof slope of the appeal dwelling with a new dormer that would be wider and thus larger than its existing counterpart. The new addition would be similar in size and general position on the roof slope to that of 36 Spenser Road, which is in the same terrace as No 32, with appropriate external materials.

7. Nevertheless, the proposal would be a sizeable addition, spanning across a significant part of the front roof slope. It could not reasonably be described as modest in size. Furthermore, it would introduce a wide horizontal feature at a high level, with an opening that would neither align with nor successfully relate to the existing windows below. This arrangement would conflict unsatisfactorily with the vertical emphasis of the front façade with windows that are taller than they are wide. This distinctive pattern of fenestration appears to be a feature of the original design to the host building and of other properties in the same terrace. Taken together, I consider that the proposal would introduce a dominant feature that would fail to respond positively to the architectural integrity of the original building and the terrace of which it would form part.

8. To my mind, the front dormer at No 36, upon which some reliance is placed in support of the appellant's case, exemplifies the visual disruption and the consequent harm to the intrinsic character of the host building and the terrace that would arise if the proposal were to proceed. Consequently, its presence, while forming part of the existing character of No 36 and the terrace, does not set a desirable precedent to follow. While other properties in the same terrace have front dormers these are noticeably smaller than the proposal and clearly subordinate to their host building.

9. From Spenser Road, the new dormer would be a prominent feature of the host building due to its elevated position and considerable size. In these views, it would partly obscure the taller sidewall of the adjacent property at 30 Spenser Road. However, it would relate awkwardly to the fenestration in the front façade of No 32 and detract from the attractive frontage of the terrace. As a result, the appeal scheme would be obtrusive in the street scene and an unwelcome addition to the local area even with more taller and substantial buildings nearby. For these reasons, the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA, to which I attach considerable importance and weight. Although the harm to the CA would be less than substantial in this case, I am not persuaded that the public benefits of the proposal, primarily through the support given to the local economy during the construction phase, would outweigh the harm that I have identified.

10. On the main issue, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would materially harm the character and appearance of the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policies Q11 and Q22 of the Lambeth Local Plan. These policies aim to ensure that the design of new dormers is appropriate to the host building and that development in conservation areas should preserve or enhance their character and appearance.

11. The proposal would also fail to adhere to the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework for development to achieve high quality design and to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Other matters

12. A larger dormer would improve the layout of the accommodation within the roof space of No 32 that in turn would enhance the living conditions of the appellant and his family. Others raise no objection to the proposal. However, these considerations do not outweigh the harm that I have identified. While the dormer to be replaced may require repair and refurbishment, there may be ways to address its current condition other than its replacement, as proposed.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR