

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 December 2016

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/D/16/3160691
20 Mount Ararat Road, London, TW10 6PG

- 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 Claire Ewing against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames.
 - The application Ref 16/2809/HOT, dated 1 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 28 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as the replacement of the lower ground floor and ground floor rear extension with a new one.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are the effects of the replacement lower ground floor and ground floor extension on:
 - The character and appearance of the St Matthias, Richmond Conservation Area, and
 - The living conditions of the occupiers of No 18 Mount Ararat Road by way of privacy and outlook.

Reasons

3. No 20 Ararat Road is a 3/4 storey semi-detached house, situated on the eastern side of the road, close to its junction with Dynevor Road. It is a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM). It currently has a two-storey extension to the rear. The rear extension comprises a glazed conservatory-type structure at ground-floor level, projecting some 2 metres beyond the existing main rear elevation, and another glazed structure below this at lower ground-floor level and projecting a further 2.5 metres. Both levels have shallow mono-pitch roofs.
 4. The proposed development would involve the demolition of the existing two-storey extension and its replacement with a larger structure, having a more modern design. The proposed structure would have the same footprint at lower ground-floor level as the existing extension, but the ground-floor level would extend out to the full 4.5 metres for a significant part of its width. In addition, it would have a flat roof and would reach an overall height of some 6.5 metres, which is around 0.6 metres higher than the current maximum height.
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Character and appearance

5. Both Nos 20 and 18 have ground-floor extensions of similar basic design and size, with a brick partition wall between them. Both have wrought iron frameworks, although that at No 18 is of an open verandah type, whilst that at No 20 has a glazed rear elevation within the ironwork, creating in effect an extended reception room. From Dynevor Road, however, where the rear elevations of both houses are prominent in the street scene, there is a degree of uniformity in the appearance of the two properties. The lower ground-floor extension at No 20 is not visible, being both partly below ground level and also hidden behind a high boundary wall.
6. The proposed extension would be timber framed and fully glazed on the rear elevation. Part of the ground-floor element would be set away from the boundary wall with No 18 by approximately 1.4 metres, and the rear elevation at the boundary with No 18 would project out almost 1 metre further than the rear elevation of the existing extensions. There would be a brick wall on the boundary at the side of the proposed ground-floor extension that would be around 3 metres high. Part of the flat roof of the proposed extension would take the form of a green roof. Internally, the extension would have a double-height ceiling at its eastern end, such that the ground-floor reception room would have a floor area only a little larger than that of the existing room.
7. The Council contends that the extension would detract from the largely traditional character of the host property; that, by virtue of its scale, it would not appear subordinate to the main house; and that the fully glazed finish would be over-dominant and prominent to the existing setting. The appellant notes the existence of extensions at other properties in the vicinity and that the current extension at No 20 is already fully glazed. Moreover, whilst the proposed extension is contemporary in design, it retains the fully glazed nature of the current situation and is of limited visibility from the public realm.
8. Paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that "Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness".
9. In this case, the local distinctiveness of the area around Mount Ararat Road is one of semi-detached houses with hipped roofs. Whilst many would appear to have rear extensions, those visible from the public realm maintain the predominant character and appearance of houses in the area, and the current extension complements both the host property and the similar extension at No 18 in terms of scale and design. Whilst a contemporary design would not necessarily, of itself, be unacceptable in this location, the proposal at No 20 would project significantly further out than that existing, and it would be taller and much more prominent when viewed from Dynevor Road. I accept that the footprint at lower ground-floor level would be unchanged, but the more visible element at ground-floor level would appear bulky and dominant. It would be out of character with the host property and its surroundings by virtue of its combination of scale and design.

10. In conclusion on this issue, I have had regard to the fact that the appeal site lies within the St Matthias, Richmond Conservation Area (CA). In this specific case, I consider that the proposed extension would have a harmful effect on the host property, its immediate surroundings and the wider area, and to that extent would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.

Living conditions

11. The existing extension at No 20, at ground-floor level is of a similar scale to that at No 18. The proposed extension at ground-floor level would project a further 2.5 metres from the existing rear elevation. Whilst it would be set away from the current boundary by some 1.4 metres for much of its depth, there would be a full height side wall projecting along the boundary almost 1 metre beyond the existing joint boundary between the two current extensions. There would be a glazed sash window in the rear elevation close to the boundary wall and the rest of the proposed ground-floor extension would be fully glazed. By virtue of the double-height ceiling in part of the proposed extension, the reception room floor would extend only very little beyond the existing floor.

12. In terms of privacy to the occupants of No 18, there would be some impact by virtue of the extended views across No 18 created by the increased glazed area within the proposed extension. This would, however, be very limited owing to the internal configuration of the proposed rooms in the extension. In terms of outlook, I note that the proposed extension at ground-floor level would be set away from the boundary for part of its length, such that it would not impinge on a 45 degree angle from windows in the main rear elevation of No 18. There would, on this basis, be little or no significant impact on light received by No 18, although there would be some limited adverse impact on outlook by virtue of the projection of the proposed extension beyond that currently existing.

13. In conclusion on this issue, I find that there would be some limited harmful impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of No 18 Mount Ararat Road, by way of privacy and outlook. Of itself, this would not be sufficient to warrant dismissal of this appeal, but it adds to my other concerns regarding the impact of the proposal on the character of the area, as outlined above.

Conclusion

14. I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the CA, and that it would cause some limited harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 18. It would, therefore, conflict with policy CP7 of the Council's Core Strategy, and with Policies DM DC1, DM HD1, and DM HD3 of the Council's Development Management Plan, all of which require developments to be compatible with and respect local character, including conserving the character and appearance of conservation areas and protecting the character and setting of BTMs. Similarly, it would conflict with guidance in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on BTMs. The benefits of the scheme, as suggested by the appellant, would not outweigh this harm.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR