
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 January 2017

by Richard S Jones BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 25 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/D/16/3160036
38 St John's Vale, London SE8 4EN

- 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 Oliver Boote against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/16/095825, dated 8 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as the "resubmission of application number DC/15/91300 - Construction of mansard roof."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve the character or appearance of the Brookmill Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site sits within a row of two storey Victorian terrace properties on the south eastern side of St John's Vale, within the Brookmill Road Conservation Area.
 4. The Brookmill Road Conservation Area character appraisal document (January 1998) (the appraisal) highlights that the conservation area's special interest lies in the cohesive character of the groups of buildings, expressed in terms of their architectural and historic features and the grid-iron layout of streets.
 5. I accept that the appraisal document is now some years old and that it states that the houses in the lower end of St Johns Vale are not as refined as their neighbouring buildings. Nevertheless, the appeal dwelling is typical of the dominant building form of the area being a two storey dwelling, situated within a terrace block and constructed from yellow London stock brick with a London (butterfly) roof concealed from the street by a corniced stucco parapet, which runs the full length of the terrace and unites the whole. This is the defining feature at roof level and has not been compromised by any existing roof extension, thereby presenting a consistent and unbroken characteristic roofscape which in my view makes a significant contribution to the special interest of the area.
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6. I appreciate that efforts have been made to reduce the height of the mansard roof and that it would be set back from the front parapet wall. However, it would remain a good deal higher than the top of the parapet and along with its raised side party walls, would effectively create an additional floor to this modest two storey property. This would significantly disrupt the unbroken and unimpaired roof line and rhythm of the terrace and would appear as an obtrusive and discordant feature that would undermine its architectural composition and that of the host dwelling. The harm would not be acceptably alleviated by the use of matching materials.
7. The visual disruption would be compounded by the site's mid-terrace location where the mansard roof extension would be readily apparent within the street scene due to the viewing angle achievable by the width of the road. The sloping nature of the street would also provide greater exposure to the mansard roof in approaching views from both directions. In addition, the chimney blocks would also be raised relative to others in the street, thereby drawing further attention to the development.
8. Whilst the rear of the mansard roof would not be visible from the street scene, it would nonetheless be very noticeable from the rear of the properties on Lind Street, where it would be seen to disrupt the existing run of London roofs.
9. I appreciate that the appellant feels disadvantaged because other properties in the area have been granted planning permission for mansard roof extensions. However, I note from the supporting Design and Access Statement that none have been approved in St John's Vale. Those that are existing in Albyn Road and Lind Street are not visible from this part of St Johns Vale and therefore do not influence the character and appearance of this intact section of terrace which shares uniformity in terms of its scale and form. I accept that No 16 St Johns Road is a relatively modern addition to the street, but again does not materially influence the character of the terrace in which the appeal dwelling is primarily viewed and does not therefore justify the harm I have described. In any case, I have determined this appeal on its own merits.
10. I note the support of St John's Society for mansards to create a larger family home so as to allow growing families to stay in the area. However, a roof extension in the manner proposed would not be appropriate to this section of terrace within the Brookmill Road Conservation Area. I have also noted the reference to the status of the conservation area, however, individual appeals such as this are not the place to debate the merits of such a designation or its precise boundaries.
11. I acknowledge that the proposal does not relate to a listed building and would not impinge on the area's grid-iron layout. Nevertheless, for the reasons I have explained, the proposal development would fail to preserve or enhance either the character or appearance of the Brookmill Road Conservation Area, the desirability of which is fully anticipated by section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and DM¹ Policy 36 and Core Strategy Policies² 15 and 16.
12. The proposal would also be contrary to DM Policies 30 and 31 and to the Lewisham Residential Standards Supplementary Planning Document, which

¹ Lewisham Local Development Framework Development Management Local Plan.

² Lewisham Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document

state, amongst other matters, that extensions will not be permitted where they would adversely affect the architectural integrity of a group of buildings as a whole or cause an incongruous element in terms of the important features of a character area. In addition, the proposal would be contrary to Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of The London Plan, which state, amongst other things, that buildings should provide a high quality design response that is informed by the surrounding historic environment and that development affecting heritage assets should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.

13. Such an outcome would also conflict with the expectations of paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which anticipates great weight being given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Whilst the magnitude of harm identified in respect of the conservation area as a whole may be considered less than substantial in the context of paragraphs 134/135 of the Framework, the arguments advanced in favour of allowing the appeal do not amount to benefits that would outweigh the great weight I must attach to the designated heritage asset's conservation.

Other matters

14. As set out in the Framework, good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and on the basis of the harm to the character and appearance of the locality, the proposal would fail to meet the sustainability aims of the Framework. The proposal would not therefore amount to sustainable development, having regard to the advice at paragraph 7 of the Framework. Accordingly, no such presumption, as anticipated in paragraph 14, applies.

Conclusion

15. For the above stated reasons, and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Richard S Jones

Inspector