
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2017

by Michael Boniface MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/D/16/3165471
15 St Stephens Road, Hounslow, TW3 2BH

- 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 Dr R Bajoria against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00992/15/P3, dated 12 September 2014, was refused by notice dated 26 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as "retention of existing front boundary wall/railing/gate".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application is retrospective and I was able to view the development during my site visit.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the St Stephens Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a relatively modern semi-detached dwelling dating from around the 1950-60's but is located in a street predominantly comprising more traditional residential properties from the late Victorian period. A great variety of house types and designs is apparent but most tend to be set back from the street behind landscaped front gardens including low level boundary walls, fences and planting. These provide a sense of enclosure to the street, a visual consistency and a pleasant sub-urban character. The St Stephens Conservation Area Statement notes that front boundaries are important to the area and introduction of hardstandings/reduction in wall or hedge enclosure should be resisted.
5. In this case, the traditional low level wall built from London brick has been removed and replaced with a taller wall with brick piers and inset railings. These far exceed the height of the previous wall and the majority of others in the street. Whilst there are examples of other tall boundary walls these tend to enclose much larger and/or grander Victorian properties and are an exception to the generally low level walls with views across found in the street.

6. Some more modern properties have tall front boundary treatments, including No 9A, but the Council suggest that this does not benefit from planning permission and again, this is an exception to the general character that I have identified. In my view, this is not a good example of a boundary treatment in the context of the conservation area and I have determined the appeal proposal on its own merits.
7. The scale and siting of the boundary treatment, coupled with the use of modern yellow bricks, creates a stark, prominent and visually intrusive appearance in the street scene. The height of the structure appears excessive, enclosing the small front forecourt, which has been hard surfaced for parking. The railings provide a more light weight appearance at upper levels but the combined visual effect of the wall, its height and the tall gates which wrap around the property are not sufficiently softened by the use of railings.
8. I have had regard to the suggestion that planting be required by condition, and I noted that some climbers had been introduced on the railings, but this is likely to have little effect on the visual impact of the large structures and their incongruous scale and siting. Similarly, the ultimate effect of weathering is likely to have little effect on the modern appearance of the brick used, notwithstanding that they are not dissimilar to those used on the house itself.
9. Overall, I conclude that the development does not preserve the character and appearance of the St Stephen's Conservation Area and whilst the harm arising is less than substantial, there are no public benefits arising from the scheme that outweigh this harm. The development is in conflict with Policies CC1, CC2, CC4 and SC7 of the Local Plan (2015) which, amongst other things, seek good design that respects local character and distinctiveness and the protection of heritage assets.
10. I have had regard to the support provided by local people, including a petition in favour of the development, but this local support does not alter my conclusion on the main issue.
11. In light of the above, and having considered all other matters, the appeal is dismissed.

Michael Boniface

INSPECTOR