

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2017

by H Butcher BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 17 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/16/3156015

Flat 73, Streatham Court, Streatham High Road, London, SW16 1DJ

- 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 Miss Francesca Attard against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 15/05730/FUL, dated 5 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 22 January 2016.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of 2 no. metal windows to the front elevation at fifth floor level for aesthetically like for like uPVC double glazed frames.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the replacement windows on the character and appearance of the host building and whether they would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Streatham High Road and Streatham Hill Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in the Streatham High Road and Streatham Hill Conservation Area (CA). This busy town centre area is distinctive due to there being a number of large purpose built mansion blocks dating from the late 19th and early-mid 20th century. The age, prominence and design of these buildings make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the CA.
 4. Streatham Court is set back from Streatham High Road and is accessed through an arched private gateway. It comprises a number of apartment blocks arranged around a central garden. The design of the apartment blocks is distinctive, in part, due to the use of Crittall type metal casement windows. The windows to the apartments, have a strong horizontal emphasis created by both the shape of the window openings and the use of thin metal glazing bars. In direct contrast, tall vertical metal framed windows divided by thin metal glazing bars sit above the entrances to the apartments. Streatham Court is typical of the type of mansion blocks found in this area and as such contributes to the heritage interest of the CA.
 5. The appeal concerns a fifth floor apartment at Streatham Court where it is proposed to replace two windows; a bay and one other, with uPVC framed double glazed windows. Policies Q5 and Q11 of the Lambeth Local Plan (2015)
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(LP) require alterations to buildings to respond to original fenestration in order to retain local distinctiveness. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document, Building Alterations and Extensions (2015) (SPD), further advises that replacement windows should follow the original style of opening, replicate frame dimensions and detailing, and avoid stick on or non-integral glazing bars. It goes on to advise in respect of heritage assets that visually obtrusive trickle-vents should be avoided and replacement windows should be of the same material as the original windows. I consider this to be sound design advice in order to protect the character of the building and to preserve the character and appearance of the CA in which it is located.

6. The replacement windows would, however, conflict with the above policies and SPD. They would have a far chunkier uPVC frame compared to the original metal windows and the window panes would be divided by stick on strips rather than metal glazing bars. The openings would also not be a good match. The main front part of the bay window would not open at all whereas currently these have three openings. Similarly the other window would omit a top hung opening. The addition of trickle vents to the frames would further represent a departure from the original window form and design.
7. I acknowledge a high proportion (around 70%) of the apartment windows in Streatham Court have been replaced with uPVC windows, some, according to the Council, without planning permission. This has seriously harmed the design of the building which in no small part relies upon the unity of its striking fenestration. Nevertheless, some of the original character and design is retained by the original apartment windows that remain. The large and prominent original windows above the entrances also make a significant contribution in this respect. The presence of other poorly detailed uPVC windows does not, therefore, persuade me to allow the appeal as it would simply add to the harm which has already occurred.
8. I note comments that the original windows are degrading but there is no evidence that the option of a replacement metal framed window with 'slimlite' type double glazing has been considered as suggested by the Council's Conservation and Design officer. I also acknowledge that historically a number of the existing metal windows were replaced at Streatham Court circa 1998. However, planning policy has moved on since that time and my decision must be made in accordance with the current development plan. This does not, therefore, alter my conclusions above.
9. Consequently the proposed replacement windows would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and as such would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the CA, contrary to Policy Q22 of the LP. In terms of the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 134 the harm to the CA would be 'less than substantial' as it would cause harm only within Streatham Court. However, that would still represent a harmful impact, adversely affecting the CA's significance as a heritage asset. Although there would be some public benefits in terms of providing better thermal insulation, and a reduction in condensation and mould, based on my findings above, the harm to the CA would clearly outweigh these. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Hayley Butcher INSPECTOR