
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 March 2017

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 12 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/W/16/3165357
15B Peak Hill Gardens, London SE26 4LE

- 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 Carsten Gardobe against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/16/097823, dated 5 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the construction of dormer extensions in the rear roof slope, a rear glazed extension at first floor level, the installation of two rooflights in the front roofslope and alterations to the rear elevation at 15B Peak Hill Gardens, in connection with the conversion of an existing residential flat into one 1 bedroom and one 2 bedroom'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site at 15B Peak Hill Gardens is located within the Cobb's Corner Conservation Area (CA). The CA is characterised by predominantly residential development to the north, and a more commercial area to the south. No 15B is a first floor flat within a three storey mid-terraced property whose traditional design and appearance are typical of the CA.
 4. To the rear, the terraced properties on Peak Hill Gardens have flat-roofed brick outriggers. Despite a number of alterations, particularly to fenestration, the original form of these structures remains legible and consistent along the terrace. Their traditional character and regularity make a positive contribution to the architectural significance of the CA.
 5. The proposal would create an extension to the rear outrigger at No 15B at first floor level. This would take the form of a glazed rectangular box measuring approximately 2.3m high by 2.2m wide, and projecting from the rear elevation by around 1.4m. To that extent, it would be subservient in size to the existing building. Nonetheless, I am concerned that the extension would depart significantly from the established character of the terrace. It would break forward of the rear building line of the outriggers, which appears to be largely
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unbroken along the terrace. It would also introduce a new built element whose materials and aesthetic would have no visual cues in the vicinity. Whilst the extension would be physically subservient, it would draw the eye unduly as a result of its lack of integration within the design of the existing building. I agree with the Council that this would particularly be the case at night, when the structure would be lit internally.

6. A deliberate contrast to the existing building style can often be a successful design approach. In this case, however, the visual contrast between the development and the traditional appearance of the terrace would be stark. In departing so radically from the prevailing character of the appeal site and the neighbouring properties, the proposal would appear as an incongruous addition. I find that the development would fail to harmonise with the existing building, would appear out of context, and would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.
7. The new roof terrace would be bounded by a glass balustrade and a wooden fence. I saw that some neighbouring properties have roof terraces on the rear outriggers. However, those that I observed had low key, unobtrusive boundaries such as a low lattice timber fence or black railings. Whilst the glass balustrade would be modest in height, it would introduce a new material and aesthetic that would not be typical of the existing boundary treatments in the vicinity. The reflective qualities of the glass would draw the eye and would stand out more than the other boundaries. At approximately 1.8m high, the proposed fence would be substantially taller than the surrounding boundaries, thus disrupting the visual regularity of the outriggers. Although less intrusive than the glass extension, the fence and the glass balustrade would thus nonetheless unacceptably fail to assimilate with the existing boundary treatments which characterise the outriggers.
8. The proposals would be visible from the car park immediately to the south of the appeal site, and from the entrance to the car park on Spring Hill. I agree that the rear of No 15B is not particularly prominent within the public realm, but this does not lessen the need for development to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
9. It is also proposed to install two new rooflights to the front roof slope of the existing building. I accept that the new rooflights would be of a conservation type, sitting flush with the roof surface, and would be relatively small in size. However, I saw that the front elevations of Peak Hill Gardens are predominantly characterised by plain, unbroken slate roof slopes. Whilst there are examples of front rooflights in the street, these are in the minority and are therefore not characteristic of the immediate area.
10. I agree that the buildings on Peak Hill Gardens are tall, and that the rooflights would not be visible from the pavement directly in front of the appeal site. However, I observed that the front roofs of No 15 and its neighbours are clearly visible as one approaches them from the north along the section of Peak Hill Gardens that runs parallel to the railway line. That being the case, I find that the proposed rooflights would be discordant elements which would be at odds with the prevailing built form in the street.
11. Drawing these factors together, I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the appearance of the appeal site, and so would harm the character and appearance of the wider CA. It would thus be at odds with

Policies 15 and 16 of the Lewisham Core Strategy Development Plan Document (June 2011), insofar as they jointly seek to conserve heritage assets. I therefore find that the duty to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area would not be satisfied.

12. Whilst the harm to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial (in terms of the phraseology used in the National Planning Policy Framework), this does not mean that the harm to the conservation area would not be significant. I accept that the proposed scheme would provide an additional residential unit, and that the Council considers the proposal to be otherwise acceptable. However, insufficient evidence has been provided in relation to any public benefits that would outweigh the harm to the CA that I have identified.
13. I have been referred to a scheme at 6 Peak Hill Gardens which the appellant considers to be similar to the appeal proposal. However, in the absence of any details of that development, or the circumstances in which it was found to be acceptable, I am unable to apportion any significant weight to that case.
14. Therefore, for the reasons above, and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR