
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2017

by Geoff Underwood BA(Hons) PGDip(Urb Cons) MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 27 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/16/3165116

Basement and Ground Floor Flat, 14 Sunnyhill Road, London SW16 2UH

- 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 Hassall against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 16/05286/FUL, dated 7 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 1 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as "install replacements and doors to property".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect the proposed replacement of doors and windows would have on the character and appearance of the host building and the significance of the Streatham High Road & Streatham Hill Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a part ground floor and part basement flat within a larger building. The ground floor includes a former shopfront with timber infill framing to the window facing onto Sunnyhill Road. It has a part glazed timber door opening onto an access alley adjacent to which is a small plastic framed window whose sill is at ground level. A pair of timber patio doors is located at basement level to the rear. The proposal seeks to replace these with windows and patio doors with white PVCu frames and the front door with one in blue PVCu.
 4. The Conservation Area covers the main commercial area along Streatham High Road and Streatham Hill and derives much of its character, and hence significance, from the architecture and streetscape created by its rich and varied buildings with predominately commercial frontages at ground floor level. This character extends to those side streets leading off the High Road, including that in which the appeal property is located.
 5. The building of which the appeal property forms a part makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by way of its architecture, design and appearance, both in itself and in the wider streetscape where it is situated between other buildings of a similar appearance. This is diminished to a degree as a result of the loss of some
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- original features including the upper floor windows in that part of the façade above the appeal property.
6. Although set within the pilasters, corbels and fascia of a traditional timber shopfront appearance, the window frames themselves have a more modern appearance with transoms at different levels and central, indented panes in a shallow 'V' plan. Nevertheless, their painted timber appearance, profile and overall vertical proportions result in a treatment which preserves the character of the building and the Conservation Area, and does not sit too uneasily with other timber shop fronts which lie to the east of the site.
 7. By contrast, the proposed windows, although broadly replicating the position of some of the existing transoms and providing a more regular arrangement would, as a result of their thick, flat frames and plastic finish (which would have a materially different appearance to that of painted timber) would adversely affect the building's character and appearance. Whilst there is no suggestion that any original or early features would be lost, neither is there any evidence that the proposed windows would follow any historic pattern.
 8. A number of doors lead into the alleyway serving the flat. Those on either side of the covered part of the alleyway nearest Sunnyhill Road are of a traditional timber moulded and panelled type with a painted finish. The panelled arrangement of the existing painted timber door on the appeal property does not appear at odds with its surroundings. Although having mouldings to replicate panels, those on the plastic door would appear applied and the blue plastic finish would conspicuously and harmfully contrast with the timber material of surrounding doors, including those of a more modern appearance.
 9. The replacement window adjacent, although in a similar material, would have a considerably thicker frame and reduced glazing area than the existing window. This would appear awkward as a result, particularly in the context of the slender metal glazing bars on the corresponding window on the opposite wall of the alleyway.
 10. The replacement patio doors would be largely hidden from view given their basement situation and surrounding buildings. They would consequently have a very limited effect the building and area's appearance. However, their material, thicker outer frames and wider replica glazing bars situated between the double glazed units would not preserve the character of that part of the building, especially in the context of the timber sliding sash windows in the three floors directly above.
 11. The treatment of all the windows and doors would therefore neither preserve nor enhance the character, or in the case of the door and windows the appearance, of either the building or the Conservation Area. The appellant points out that a number of windows in the host and surrounding buildings have been replaced with plastic windows and that some shopfronts, both those in properties in commercial use and those in residential conversions do not have timber construction. In particular the shopfront in No 12 next door to the west has an inelegant brick infill with plastic windows inserted in it.
 12. However the Council advise that this, and other examples in the vicinity, do not have the benefit of planning permission. Many of the examples I saw confirmed that plastic windows with flat, wide frames can have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the area as can poorly detailed

shopfront and door treatments constructed from materials unsympathetic to their host buildings. Whilst there are a significant number of examples of these in the immediate vicinity, including plastic windows in the floors above the front elevation of the appeal site, they are not so ubiquitous that they have become an overwhelming characteristic of the whole Conservation Area.

13. In particular, I noted when visiting the site that the façade of that part of the building on the other side of the arch from the appeal property retains its timber sash windows and painted timber window frames in its shop front. The windows in two other shopfronts to the east, in whose context the appeal site would be viewed, also have a painted timber appearance, albeit than an intervening one appears to have a coloured alloy framed window and door.
14. I am also conscious that Council policies seek to respond to and reinforce an area's positive characteristics and that they "will pay particular regard to ensuring that poor examples of alterations within conservation areas do not set precedents for future proposals and that any subsequent new works raise standards in terms of its design, detailing, materials and appearance"¹.
15. I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and having done so I consider that the proposal would harm these attributes. The proposal would be contrary to Local Plan² Policies Q2, Q5, Q8, Q11 and Q22. Together these require that development respects and reinforces the positive aspects of its local context, the historic character of the area and original architecture, window detailing, joinery and materials as well as not unacceptably compromising visual amenity, amongst other criteria.
16. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance³ that supports these policies which advises that replacement windows should replicate the appearance, detailing and, in the case of heritage assets the materials, of the original windows. Whilst this harm to the significance of the Conservation Area would be less than substantial, there is no evidence that the proposal would have any public benefits which would outweigh that harm.
17. The appellant considers that the replacement windows would provide improved performance, weather proofing and thermal efficiency and there would appear to be no objection to the principle of replacing the front windows in light of the reported security and water ingress issues. I have noted the appellant's contractors' comments about the relative structural performance of timber and plastic windows of the size to be used in the front window. However, this does not amount to conclusive evidence that only plastic frames could be used. From the information provided, it would appear that limitations in the particular manufacturers' ability to produce timber frames above a certain height prevented them from specifying them. There remains little substantive evidence to suggest that the improvements in performance the appellant seeks could only be achieved through the proposed scheme.
18. I note that the appellant considers that the Council have not raised an objection in respect of the design of the proposed fittings, only their material. However, the Council's Delegated Register report refers to detailing and the

¹ Lambeth local Plan, 2015, paragraph 10.92.

² Lambeth local Plan, 2015.

³ Building Alterations & Extensions Supplementary Planning Document, 2015

proposal must be determined in accordance with the development plan whose policies require consideration of design and detailing as well as materials. Whilst the presence of other unsympathetic treatments in nearby buildings is a material consideration to which I have given some weight, it is not one which would indicate taking a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan for the reasons set out above.

Conclusion

19. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host building and the Conservation Area, and consequently the significance of the designated heritage asset. It would be contrary to the development plan and supplementary guidance. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Geoff Underwood

INSPECTOR