
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 March 2017

by David Walker MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 5th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/16/3165830

The Limes, Limes Gardens, London SW18 5HW

- 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 Jonathan Hager of Etindale Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2016/3054, dated 26 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'The proposals include raising the roof of a 1930's apartment block then creating 9 residential self-contained apartments within this loft space. The proposals include the addition of dormers to the rear of the loft space'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are the effect of the proposal on:
 - i) the character and appearance of the West Hill Road Conservation Area, and
 - ii) the living conditions of future occupants having regard to the availability of daylight and outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal buildings are located within the West Hill Road Conservation Area where I have a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the designated area. Having regard to the conservation area appraisal and management plan provided the significance of the heritage asset is derived from the differing architectural styles and housing types. It is also apparent that elegant villas flank both entrances to Limes Gardens at West Hill Road and Wimbledon Park Road.
 4. Although the appeal buildings are not positively identified within the appraisal, and are not listed, they remain a good example of 1930's mansion block architecture and are largely unaltered. They are important to an understanding of the twentieth century evolution of the area as a London suburb and are a distinctive part of the conservation area as experienced from both within and outside of Limes Gardens.
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5. The raising of the roof to create the 9 apartments would be achieved by the introduction of a wide band of brickwork below the eaves. This would maintain the roof profile while the existing chimneys and front dormers would be reinstated. New dormers along the rear elevations would be dominant roof additions, however, in an area with few other examples of dormer windows.
6. Such roof additions as would be visually crowding and visible in street scene views would undermine the significance of the original front dormers as punctuating elements that highlight the main entrances. Along the prominent rear elevation of apartment building A-C the additional dormers would jar with the significance of the architectural detailing of the villas along West Hill Road. Although the dormers could be constructed in materials that would be sympathetic to the appearance of the host building this would not be sufficient to mitigate for the visual clutter that would arise.
7. Additionally, raising the roof would alter the diminishing terms of each storey of the appeal buildings. It would emphasise the top storey thereby undermining the broadly classical proportions of the facades to the detriment of the original design. Overall, the proposed alterations would have a harmful effect that would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.
8. While the harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area would not amount to substantial harm, it would conflict with Policies DMS2 and DMH5 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Development Management Policies Document 2016 (the DMPD) that seek to sustain, conserve and enhance the significance, appearance, character and setting of the heritage asset.

Living conditions

9. Some rooms of the proposed apartments would rely on roof light windows as the only source of natural light and outlook. It would be an unsatisfactory arrangement for future occupants to have an outlook only towards the sky, particularly for living rooms. Of the dormer windows that would otherwise provide the main source of outlook these would be positioned at a height that would be above eye level for many future occupants.
10. While I have no reason to dispute the availability of daylight, such a poor level of outlook would conflict with the advice of the Mayor of London's Housing SPG for single aspect apartments to have a favourable outlook. The proposal would therefore lead to harm to the living conditions of future occupants that would conflict with the requirement of Policy DMH4 of the DMPD to achieve a satisfactory housing environment.

Conclusion

11. Although the additional apartments and associated contributions would undoubtedly bring benefits, the poor quality of the accommodation that would be provided would not amount to a significant public benefit to outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Walker

INSPECTOR