
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 May 2017

by David Cliff BA Hons MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 17th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/17/3166791

Albion House, Colne Road, Twickenham, TW2 6QL

- 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 Steven McDicken (Metbase Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames.
 - The application Ref 16/3088/FUL, dated 1 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 7 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is 'alterations and extension of Albion House, Colne Road, Twickenham to form a basement for car parking and an additional storey at roof level to form 1 No. two bedroom, 4 person dwellingflat including new stairwell and lift extension and balconies to approved dwellingflat under Prior Approval'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - i) The effect upon the character and appearance of the area and upon the setting of the nearby listed building (74 Colne Road) and Building of Townscape Merit (21 Knowle Road),
 - ii) Whether the proposal makes appropriate provision for affordable housing,
 - iii) The effect upon highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance, and setting of heritage assets

3. The area around the site is characterised by predominantly two storey residential properties. Though there are some examples where properties are noticeably larger and of greater height than others, for the most part existing buildings are of a modest two storey scale and height. The existing two storey building on the appeal site is of a relatively utilitarian appearance in comparison to the more traditionally designed buildings that generally characterise the area. There are some other newer buildings in the area though they are few in number.
 4. The appeal site is prominently located at the junction of Colne Road and Albion Road. Whilst the appellant has sought to set the roof extension back from the edges of the existing roof, this would only be achieved to a limited degree. The
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- 2nd floor extension would result in a substantial increase in the height, bulk and massing of the building, in contrast to the more modest scale of most of the existing properties in the immediate vicinity of the site. The bulk of the new roof form would also appear as a discordant feature in comparison with the lower pitched roofs of adjacent properties in Albion Road and Knowle Road.
5. Although I note that the appellant has designed the extension in accordance with a minimum recommended ceiling height of 2.5m, there is not overriding need for an additional dwelling and therefore this factor carries only limited weight in my consideration of the merits of the scheme given the harmful impact I consider would result from its additional bulk and massing.
 6. The proposed stair and lift wells would increase the bulk of the building in the Albion Road frontage, rising to a full three storeys in height and projecting significantly forward of the remainder of the elevation above ground floor level. Furthermore, they would appear as being particularly obtrusive when viewed in the approach to the site from the west and be in stark contrast with the adjacent terrace of two storey dwellings located on Albion Road to the west.
 7. No.74 Colne Road is a Grade II listed building located on the opposite side of Colne Road to the appeal site. No.21 Knowle Road, on the corner of Colne Road with Knowle Road has been designated by the Council as a Building of Townscape Merit. In both cases, the buildings are located on the opposite side of the road to the appeal site. The appearance of the existing building does not particularly add to the setting of these buildings. Nevertheless, the proposal would significantly add to its bulk and massing. Given its location and proximity to both heritage assets it would appear in views of these other buildings. Due to its increased size and scale, I consider that it would appear as excessively assertive and would visually compete with the heritage buildings, to the detriment of their setting.
 8. In the case of 74 Colne Road, and with regard to paragraphs 132-134 of the National Planning Framework ('the Framework'), the proposal would result in *less than substantial* harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. I must attach considerable importance and weight to that harm which I do not consider would be outweighed by any public benefits of the proposed development.
 9. Whilst the appeal site comprises a corner plot, located away from the commercial centre and within an area of predominantly modest two storey properties, I do not consider that there is justification for the extension proposed given the harm I have identified. Furthermore, although the external alterations to the exterior of the existing building would improve its appearance, this does not justify the addition of an additional storey of the size proposed that would result in the harm identified above. External alterations have already been approved by the Council under a separate application and it appears that such alterations could still be implemented securing the improvements to the appearance of the building, irrespective of the outcome of this appeal.
 10. I have considered the submissions made in the appellant's Heritage Statement, but for the reasons outlined above I have come to a different conclusion on the merits of the proposed development.

11. I conclude that the proposed development would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and would be harmful to the setting of 74 Colne Road and 21 Knowle Road. It would therefore be contrary to the relevant design and heritage aims of policies DM HD2, DM HD3, DM DC1 of the Development Management Plan (2011), policy CP7 of the Core Strategy (2009) and the Framework.
12. I have not considered policy DM HO2 of the Development Management Plan to be relevant in this case as it relates to infill development which the accompanying text to the policy interprets as involving the development of a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage. This proposal does not amount to such development.

Affordable Housing

13. Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy states that some form of contribution towards affordable housing will be expected on all new housing sites, with financial contributions required on sites capable of less than 10 units gross. This is reiterated by policy DM HO6 of the Development Management Plan.
14. The Council says that small sites make a significant contribution to housing supply and that the completion rate from larger sites of more than 10 units is low. There is consequently reliance on small sites to meet local affordable housing need with there currently being a large deficit of affordable homes in the borough. The appellant has not sought to dispute the Council's submissions in this regard. The proposal includes no provision or mechanism for an affordable housing contribution and therefore is contrary to the relevant policies referenced above.
15. I acknowledge the aims of national policy to reduce the burden on small-scale developers by removing the requirement for affordable housing and tariff style contributions on smaller developments. Planning applications must be decided in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. I have therefore had regard to the relevant Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as a material consideration to which I have attached substantial weight. I also note the support for such policy from the Home Builders Federation as set out in the appellant's statement.
16. Nevertheless, in this case it appears clear that the borough has a very pressing need for affordable housing and is dependent on contributions from smaller developments in order to meet this need. Furthermore, no evidence has been made to demonstrate that the contribution required by the development plan policies in this case would make the scheme unviable.
17. I have given very significant weight to the need for affordable housing in the borough and the reliance on smaller sites to meet such a need. In this case, I consider that this outweighs the relevant parts of the WMS and PPG.
18. Whilst the appellant says that the need for an affordable housing contribution was not raised by the Council during the application process, this has had very minimal bearing on my consideration of the merits of this issue which I have considered against the relevant provisions of the development plan and other material considerations.

19. I conclude on this issue that the proposal would be contrary to policies CP15 of the Core Strategy, DM HO6 of the Development Management Plan and the Council's Supplementary Planning Document – Affordable Housing (March 2014).

Highway Safety

20. Following the Council's decision on the application, the appellant has provided details of different options for a revised parking arrangement seeking to address the objections of the Council in this respect. Two options have been provided with the appellant's appeal statement along with a further option with the appellant's further comments which I understand is the subject of a separate application to the Council.
21. Whilst the first two options have been considered by the Council in its statement (with concerns still being raised), it has not had the opportunity to comment through this appeal on the additional option submitted with the further comments. Other interested parties have also not had the same opportunity to comment on the revised drawings as they would have done if they had been submitted through a planning application. The Procedural Guide – Planning Appeals – England states that where an appeal is made the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme. The provision of different options creates further difficulty as the scheme considered at appeal should generally be a single scheme rather than one that contains different options. I have therefore not considered the amended drawings provided with the appeal documents and have based my considerations on the scheme that was before the Council when it determined the planning application.
22. Alternative options are a matter for the appellant and the Council outside of this appeal. Even should I have gone on to consider the alternative options provided and found them to be acceptable, this would not outweigh the harm I have identified in respect of the first two main issues.
23. In respect of the originally submitted drawings, I share similar concerns to the Council concerning the layout of the parking spaces and turntable in the basement. From the information provided, it appears that manoeuvring vehicles on to and off the turntable would be awkward. There is no detailed information provided of the dimensions of the turntable in relation to the size of cars and it appears from the drawing to be of limited dimensions in relation to the size of spaces.
24. There is consequently a strong likelihood that cars would not be able to turn within the site resulting in the need to reverse from the site on to Albion Road. Due to limited sight lines, including of passing pedestrians, and the existence of cars parked along this section of the road, the arrangement would be likely to result in adverse implications for pedestrian and vehicle safety. The proposal would therefore not accord with the highway safety aims of policy DM TP2 of the Development Management Plan.

Other matters

25. Although the proposal would make a contribution of one additional dwelling to the supply of housing within the borough, this contribution would be a modest one and would not outweigh the harm I have identified above.

Conclusion

26. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cliff

INSPECTOR