
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 May 2017

by A Napier BA(Hons) MRTPI MIEMA CEnv

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

Decision date: 26 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/D/17/3168200
24 Huntingfield Road, London SW15 5HE

- 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 Matthew Withers against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2016/5962, dated 11 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is 2 storey rear extension and loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The appeal site is located within the Dover House Conservation Area. This is a designated heritage asset and I am mindful of my statutory duties in this regard. The main issue in this appeal is whether or not the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within an established housing estate, in a predominantly residential area. It is largely comprised of short terraces of two-storey dwellings that are highly consistent in their scale, appearance and overall design. These terraces generally follow a formal layout and are set back from the highway, separated from it by individual front gardens. From the evidence available to me, I consider that the importance of the Conservation Area is largely derived from the regular pattern of development and the uniformity of design of the built form within it, the spaces between and around those buildings, and the presence of street trees and other vegetation.
 4. The area to the rear of the appeal site, containing the garage blocks, parking areas and adjacent housing in Newnes Path, is outside the Conservation Area and has a distinctly different character to the older housing estate. The modern housing in Newnes Path varies in height and scale and is markedly different in its appearance to the terraces of older housing nearby.
 5. The appeal dwelling is a mid-terrace property, situated to the north of Huntingfield Road on the edge of the Conservation Area, with the rear garden backing onto the access road to the parking area. Although the garden and those of neighbouring dwellings contain a number of trees and other vegetation, which provide some screening, filtered views of the rear elevation
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of the dwelling are clearly visible from this direction. At the time of my visit, a section of the rear boundary fence had been removed, enabling views of the whole of this elevation. However, even with the fence in place, due to the elevated position of the property relative to the adjacent land, the upper part of the dwelling would be clearly visible, in common with neighbouring houses. In addition, further contextual views are also possible, across the rear elevation of the terrace, from close to the junction of the access with Newnes Path.

6. No alterations are proposed to the important front elevation of the appeal dwelling and the design details proposed, including the use of matching materials, a lower ridge height and a smaller projection at first floor level, would reduce the visual impact of the proposal on the appeal property. Nonetheless, due to its siting, height, mass and scale, the two-storey extension would result in a material change to the overall form and scale of the house and would dominate its rear elevation. Whilst the rear of the terrace is less sensitive than the main front elevation, it is nonetheless publicly visible and currently appears largely unaltered.
7. Given this context, the erection of a mid-terrace two-storey rear projection as proposed would be visually discordant and have a materially disruptive effect on the relationship of the appeal property with its immediate neighbours, including the uniformity of the terrace and its appearance within the streetscene. For these reasons, I consider that the scale of the proposed extension would be excessive and, notwithstanding the design details proposed, it would result in an incongruous and unsympathetic addition, which would be detrimental to the overall character and appearance of the area and harmful to the significance of the heritage asset.
8. The Council has also expressed reservations that, should the appeal proposal be allowed, it would be difficult for the local planning authority to resist other similar schemes. Given the immediate context of the site, I consider that there is a reasonable prospect of similar development being repeated nearby and the cumulative effect of this would add to the harm identified above.
9. Other extensions within the locality have been drawn to my attention and I saw some of these on my visit to the area, including other rear additions visible from the adjacent parking area and the two-storey extensions in Pleasance Road. I do not have full details of these other developments or the background to those decisions. However, from the limited information available to me, I consider that, in their siting, scale, design and relationship to the host property and their immediate neighbours, these other examples are materially different and not directly comparable to the scheme before me, which I have considered on its merits and in light of all representations made. As such, none of these other examples, either individually or cumulatively, leads me to alter my findings above.
10. Accordingly, overall and for these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would result in harm to its significance, to which I give considerable importance and weight. It would be contrary to the *Wandsworth Local Plan Development Management Policies Document 2016* Policies DMS1, DMS2 and DMH5, where they collectively seek to protect local character and appearance, including in relation to the historic environment.

11. The proposal would not lead to the loss of the dwelling and would affect one site within a much larger Conservation Area. As a result, I consider that the harm identified to the significance of the heritage asset, whilst material, would be less than substantial. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that, in the case of designated heritage assets, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
12. The main public benefits resulting from the scheme would be the provision of additional living accommodation, in a location that is within easy reach of a wide range of services and facilities, and so contribute to sustaining the residential use of the property in the long-term. It would also be likely to result in additional support for local services and facilities both during construction and after occupation. Given the scale of development proposed, these benefits are likely to be limited and there is nothing before me to lead me to consider that the long-term residential use of the dwelling is at risk. Nonetheless, taking into account the general encouragement in the Framework for such development, I give these benefits moderate weight.
13. Paragraph 132 of the Framework advises that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset in considering the impact of a proposal on its significance. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting and, as heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. In addition, paragraph 131 of the Framework refers to the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. For the above reasons, I consider that the development would not make such a contribution and, as such, whilst the use of the site as proposed may be viable, it would not represent its optimum use.
14. For these reasons, the benefits of the proposal would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm identified to the significance of the heritage asset and the proposal would not meet the aims of paragraph 17 of the Framework, to achieve high quality design, take account of the different roles and character of different areas and conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Other matters

15. It is not a matter of dispute between the main parties that, due to its siting and design, the proposal would not be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and there is nothing substantive before me to lead me to a different view in this respect. However, this matter would not address the harm identified above.
16. The three roles of sustainable development are mutually dependent. Paragraphs 6-9 of the Framework indicate that 'sustainability' should not be interpreted narrowly. Elements of sustainable development cannot be undertaken in isolation but should be sought jointly and simultaneously. Sustainable development also includes 'seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment as well as in people's quality of life'.
17. For the reasons given, I conclude that the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area and the significance of the heritage asset would

significantly outweigh the benefits of the scheme. As such, the proposal would not represent sustainable development and would not accord with the development plan as a whole.

18. I understand that the proposal received positive feedback at the pre-application stage of the planning process and the appellant was not advised of the Council's intention to refuse the application. Whilst these matters are not primarily before me as part of this appeal, but are issues for the local planning authority in the first instance, in any event, they would not lead me to alter my findings above.

Conclusion

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

A Napier

INSPECTOR