
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 May 2017

by G J Fort BA PGDip LLM MCD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V5570/D/17/3170879

8 Canonbury Park South, Islington, London N1 2JJ

- 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 and Mrs Helen and Michael Stanish against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Islington.
 - The application Ref P2016/4098/FUL, dated 16 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 December 2016.
 - The development is described as "Remodelling of existing attached (formerly semi detached) 1950's residence at 8 Canonbury Park South, Islington to include side, rear and lower ground floor extensions."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council adopted an updated version of its Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD) in January 2017 following the determination of the application that led to this appeal. I sought views on the effects of this change from the appellants, and as a consequence I am satisfied that no prejudice would occur to any party as a result of my consideration of the SPD as part of my assessment of the planning merits of the appeal.

Main Issue

3. I consider the main issue in this appeal to be whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Canonbury Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. Whilst not a listed building, the appeal property is located within the Canonbury Conservation Area and is one of a pair of dwellings with a steeply pitched hipped roof, set back from the road with a gable projection at the front. It has a brick-faced attached garage, which adjoins the one of the neighbouring property. Although set within a wider area and street with a diversity of housing styles, the appeal building is one of a number of similar pairs of dwellings, the restrained detailing of which, and more modest scale are a pleasing contrast to the larger and more formal buildings in their surroundings. The deep and well-vegetated back garden of the appeal dwelling and those of its near neighbours combine with mature street trees to impart a verdant
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character to the area. The gap between the appeal building and its neighbouring property above the attached garages is similar to the general development pattern of its surroundings, offering views through to mature trees and imparting a sense of spaciousness.

5. The Conservation Area's significance derives, to a substantial degree, from the spacious and park-like plotting of its predominantly residential buildings. Moreover, in being an example of early post-war dwellings in the area, reputedly by the architect Louis de Soissons, the appeal dwelling contributes to the group value of these buildings, and the historic and aesthetic significance of the Conservation Area more generally. Whilst I note comments regarding de Soissons's views about alteration of some of his original designs prior to building, these do not alter my conclusions regarding the contribution of the appeal building, and those similar ones in its environs to the significance, character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
6. The proposed development seeks to extend the ground floor element to the rear and include a lower ground floor basement extension. The garage would be converted to habitable accommodation and a window would be inserted in place of its existing door. The appeal scheme would introduce considerable changes to the roof including extending the plane of the roof's hip, to create a flat-roofed extension to the rear, set down from the roof ridge, and containing extensive glazing. The rear elevation would be remodelled beneath the altered roof with extensive areas of glazing.
7. The proposed alterations to the rear would extend more or less across the full width of the appeal dwelling's roof. This width, taken together with the depth of the roof extension would result in a development of excessive proportions, which would dominate its host dwelling and impart a lopsided imbalance to the pair of properties within which it resides. Furthermore, the prominent area of flat roof would interrupt the roof-scape of the similarly-scaled properties in the appeal dwelling's immediate environs that are otherwise free from alterations of the extent of the proposed development. As a result, the rear roof alteration would appear incongruous and erode the appeal dwelling's contribution to the group value of its similarly scaled and detailed near neighbours.
8. Moreover, the harmfulness of these effects would be exacerbated by the excessive areas of fenestration at the roof and first floor levels, which would be at jarring variance to the simpler elevational detailing of its neighbouring properties. Whilst I note the appellant's comments regarding the limited visibility of the rear and its private rather than public function, the upper elements of the proposed development could be viewed from Willow Bridge Road, where its excessive fenestration would be particularly eye-catching. Thus taking these matters together the proposed development would fail to integrate with the historic environment and would thus cause considerable harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and diminish its significance. The proposed development's harmfulness in these respects would not be mitigated to any significant degree, by its avoidance of pastiche or by the use of facing materials which matched or complemented those of its host building.
9. I note that the appellants consider an extension to a property at 6a Grange Grove to be similar to the proposed development. However, the roofline of the pair of dwellings containing No 6a has already been altered by a flat-roofed

dormer on the rear roof slope of its attached neighbour, and in any event the rear is less visible in public views. Whilst aspects of the design are similar to the appeal proposal the roof treatment to the rear of the extension at No 6a is considerably different. Moreover, whilst the Grange Grove dwelling is around 100m away from the appeal property, the two buildings and particularly their rear aspects are not immediately inter-visible. In any event, each proposal has to be considered on its own merits.

10. I am mindful of references to other alterations within the Conservation Area that the appellants consider provide precedents for the appeal scheme; however, I have not been supplied with the planning history of these sites, and the details of alterations and the styles and contexts of the properties differ considerably to that of the proposed development. As a consequence, these extensions and alterations within the wider environs of the appeal dwelling do not establish a context that would soften the proposed development's harmful effects to the area's character and appearance.
11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a conservation area, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (paragraph 132). In the context of the Conservation Area as a whole I consider that the relatively localised effects of the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to its significance. However, the Framework makes clear, at paragraph 134, that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
12. I have no substantive evidence before me to suggest that the proposed development would secure the optimum viable use of the property. The proposed development could improve the living conditions of its occupants in terms of increased natural lighting, an internal layout with more generous room sizes, and integration of the house with the garden. However, due to the size of the appeal dwelling and limited number of occupants it could accommodate, it would be a public benefit of an extremely modest scale that would weigh in favour of the proposed development to only a minimal degree.
13. The proposed development could refresh the front elevation, including through the replacement of the garage door with a window. However, these elevational alterations could be progressed independently from the proposed roof extensions, and as a result weigh in favour of the appeal scheme only to a very limited degree.
14. Similarly, whilst I note comments regarding the improvements to energy efficiency which could be delivered, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would be the only way to achieve such improvements. Moreover, I have been supplied with no substantive evidence to demonstrate the enhancements that the proposed development could deliver in these regards. As a consequence, this is a matter that weighs in favour of the development to only a modest degree.
15. I note that the proposed development could avoid harmful effects to the living conditions of the occupants of adjoining dwellings; would meet the requirements of the Council's policies regarding basement extensions; that its effects to trees could be acceptable; and that English Heritage offered no comments in respect of the scheme. However, these matters do not constitute

positive benefits of the scheme and thus have a neutral effect on the overall planning balance.

16. As a result the harm caused to the significance of the Conservation Area would not be demonstrably outweighed by any of the public benefits advanced in favour of the proposed development and for these reasons the proposed development would clearly conflict with the Framework in this regard. Moreover, conscious of my duty arising from section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I consider that for the reasons given above, the proposed development would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Canonbury Conservation Area.
17. Furthermore, for these reasons the proposed development would also conflict with Policies 7.4 and 7.8 of the London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London- Consolidated with alterations since 2011 (adopted March 2016); Policy CS9 of Islington's Core Strategy (adopted February 2011); Policies DM2.1 and DM2.3 of Islington's Development Management Policies (adopted June 2013); and Islington's Conservation Area Design Guidelines (adopted January 2002). Taken together, and amongst other matters, the policies and guidance seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets and the historic environment, and ensure that new developments make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the area.
18. I am aware that the current iteration of the SPD was not available to the appellants during the design process for the scheme, and that in some respects it is more prescriptive than its earlier version. However, I consider that for the reasons given above, the proposed development would conflict with the policies of the development plan and the Framework, which were extant at the time of the determination of the planning application that led to this appeal. As a consequence, the proposed development would not meet the SPD objective to ensure that new developments make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the area.

Conclusion

19. No material considerations have been advanced sufficient to outweigh the appeal scheme's conflicts with the aforementioned policies of the development plan. Accordingly, for the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G J Fort

INSPECTOR