

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2017

by C J Ford BA (Hons) BTP Dist. MRTPI

a person appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 23 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/D/17/3173210

13C Ulundi Road, Blackheath, London SE3 7UQ

- 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 Stephen Whitefield against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref 16/2670/F, dated 16 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is part 1/part 2 storey extension to rear of property, installation of new roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issues are:
 - i. the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the Westcombe Park Conservation Area, and
 - ii. its effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring dwellings with particular regard to visual impact.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. As the appeal site is located within a Conservation Area (CA), it is necessary to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) also sets out that Conservation Areas are designated heritage assets and that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
4. The character of the area is primarily residential and mainly comprises Victorian and Edwardian two and three storey houses. However, the appeal property is unusual in that it is a narrow former coach house located between the flanks of two vastly taller and more typical three storey properties. The contribution the building makes to the character and appearance of this part of the CA largely derives from the quirkiness of its diminutive proportions and the juxtaposition with the considerably larger neighbouring buildings.
5. With regard to the front elevation, a key element of the building's character is its fairly simple gable fronted roof form. The only notable bulk above what visually appears as the eaves level is part of a parapet wall running along one side of the building. The proposed development would result in the ridge height

of broadly the rear half of the roof being marginally lowered. However, the equivalent of the eaves level would be raised along this section. As a consequence, there would be additional bulk projecting above the remaining front roof profile.

6. This complex 'piggy-back' style roof extension, albeit omitting an increase in the ridge height, would be a wholly alien and harmful addition to the existing simple character of the building's roof form. Notwithstanding its set back and height, it would be visible from the public realm, particularly given the partial screening provided by the parapet wall only applies to one side of the roof. The Westcombe Park Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2010 warns of the danger of unsympathetic roof extensions which detract from the character of the host building and the CA. The proposal would qualify as an example of such an extension.
7. With regard to the rear elevation, the proposed pine timber cladding at the first floor level would be harmful owing to its prominence and because it is not a typical material used in the construction of the host property or neighbouring buildings. The timber used in the verandah at No 15 Ulundi Road is not comparable because it is closely associated with the garden area.
8. The Council considers the proposed full width extension would be an over-dominant addition that would be out of keeping with the character of the host building and its surroundings. However, the depth of the extension would be modest at both the ground and first floor levels. The overall size, scale and mass of the extension would not fundamentally change the narrow character of the host building. Its diminutive proportions would continue to starkly contrast with the neighbouring buildings.
9. The proportion of glazing in the rear elevation would significantly increase. Nevertheless, this would not be harmful as it would primarily be focussed at the less prominent ground floor level and it would follow the pattern established by the neighbouring properties.
10. Consequently, whilst there are some aspects of the proposal that would have neutral effects, they are outweighed by the harm which arises from the proposed changes to the building's roof form and the use of inappropriate materials in the rear elevation.
11. Paragraph 134 of the Framework specifies that where a development leads to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, as applies in this case, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the development. The benefits of the proposal include providing additional living space as well as an improved layout and rear outlook at the property. There would also be investment in the fabric and condition of the building. Nevertheless, it is considered that these benefits do not outweigh the identified harm. It is also noted the proposal represents a modified scheme from one previously withdrawn by the appellant. However, it is apparent from the findings above that the changes made are insufficient to make the revised scheme acceptable.
12. Accordingly, it is concluded that the proposal would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host property and the Westcombe Park CA. It would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. The development would conflict with Policies 7.4 and 7.8

of the London Plan 2016 as well as Policies DH1, DH(a) and DH(h) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies 2014 (CS). Amongst other things, these policies require residential extensions to be of a design and scale appropriate to the building and locality. They also seek to conserve the significance of heritage assets.

13. The development would similarly conflict with the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance' 2016 (SPD). It specifies that all new residential extensions should be sensitive to the original building and respect the character of the area.

Living conditions

14. The Council's reason for refusal solely relates to the first floor rear extension. This element would not project beyond the brick flank wall to the neighbouring conservatory at No 13A Ulundi Road. There may be a view from inside the conservatory, through its roof, of a deeper and slightly higher flank wall to the appeal property which stands closer than at present. However, there would be no harmful change in the living conditions of the occupiers as a result. That would similarly be the case in respect of the rear first floor bay window which is positioned above the conservatory.
15. The first floor of the development would be set back from the end of the single storey rear extension to No 15. As that extension has a tiled crown roof, there would appear to be no harm arising at the ground floor level in terms of the development's visual impact. The rear first floor juliet balcony to No 15 is set in a sufficient distance from the boundary that the modest increase in the depth and bulk of the first floor at the appeal site would not result in a harmful change to the living conditions of the occupiers.
16. It is therefore concluded that the proposed development would not have an unacceptably harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring dwellings with particular regard to visual impact. It would not conflict with Policy DH(b) of the CS or the SPD. These set out that a development should not cause an unacceptable loss of amenity to adjacent occupiers, or result in an unneighbourly sense of enclosure.

Other matters

17. It is acknowledged that planning permission was granted for a very similar proposal in 2010. However, that permission has since lapsed and the appellant recognises the planning policy context has changed in the intervening period. In particular, the Framework was published which emphasises the need for high quality design.

Conclusion

18. Notwithstanding the finding on living conditions, the harm in respect of the character and appearance of the host property and the CA is an overriding consideration. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

C J Ford

APPOINTED PERSON