
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 June 2017

by **A J Mageean BA (Hons) BPI PhD MRTPI**

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

Decision date: 30th June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/17/3170151

Flat Top Floor 3, 24 North Side Wandsworth Common, London SW18 2SL

- 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 David Angeli against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2016/7246, dated 15 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 9 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is erection of two side and one rear dormer windows and a conservation style rooflight to the front roof pitch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appellant has submitted amended plans with the appeal documentation. The amended plans address inaccuracies with the position of the existing side extension and do not alter the detail of the proposal considered by the Council. As such, and as the Council has had the opportunity to comment on them, I have considered the appeal on the basis of these amended plans.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wandsworth Common Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal building is a four storey detached property located in an area characterised by similarly large Victorian villas of varying design. This gault brick structure displays design elements typical of the period, including a three storey canted bay, gabled roof and large chimneys. It also has a three storey flat roofed side extension, which is of basic design and detracts somewhat from the appearance of the building.
5. The Wandsworth Common Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CACA&MS) refers to the special character of this area¹ being formed by the substantial Victorian villas, including their relationship to Spencer Park to the southwest. It is also noted that *Northside Wandsworth Common is characterised by large street trees and is still pleasant despite the*

¹ Whilst the appeal site is located on the north side of the road within sub-area B 'Elsynge Road', the south side of the road lies within sub-area C 'Spencer Park'. It is therefore relevant to consider the character of both sub-areas.

impact of the heavy traffic that runs through it. Some roof additions are visible in the locality which are mostly small scale and discretely located.

6. The current proposal would place dormer roof additions on the rear and side roof slopes, and conservation style roof lights in the front roof slope. The Council raises no objection to the proposed additions to the front and rear roof slopes and, as these are of appropriate scale and modest appearance, I have no reason to take a different view.
7. The side dormer additions would be larger lead clad structures with a square plan form and flat roof with centrally placed windows. The size of these structures has been reduced from the earlier plans submitted with the planning application, and the windows altered to reflect the four pane sash windows which characterise the host building.
8. However, Victorian dormer windows were typically wholly subservient to the roof form, their width generally no greater than the windows below. In contrast the proposed dormers would be comparatively large structures in relation to the size of the roof as a whole, particularly in terms of their width. This combined with their somewhat basic box-like design, involving large areas of lead cladding to the dormer cheeks, would mean that their design would not relate well to the Victorian character of the host building. In this respect there would be harm to the character and appearance of the host building.
9. I accept that the position of the side dormers towards the centre of each side of the roof, combined with the relatively shallow roof pitch and the greater height of this building in comparison with its neighbours, would mean that they would be mostly hidden in views from the front of the building. However the dormer on the western roof slope would be at least partly visible in angled views from the west, with the side extension only masking this area in those views close to the building. I accept that the dormer on the eastern roof slope would be mostly screened from public view due to the close siting of No 22 adjacent to this side of the property. These structures would, nonetheless, be visible from neighbouring properties.
10. Whilst not referred to by the Council, the appellant notes various aspects of the SPD² advice. This states that *often a simple flat topped dormer is preferable to one with a pitched roof on it.* However in the present case the excessive width of the dormer means that a flat roof of this scale would not successfully integrate with the host roof. The guidance also states *that the size of the dormer should be smaller than the windows on the top storey below.* The appellant notes that such a restriction would not be possible in this case as it would result in there being insufficient headroom internally. However in environmentally sensitive locations such as conservation areas such internal issues should not override concerns about character and appearance. Furthermore the fact that the proposals would comply with some aspects of this guidance does not indicate their acceptability overall.
11. The appellant also notes that the proposal would not have an impact on those factors noted as issues of concern in relation to the management of the Conservation Area in the CACA&MS. It is also suggested that these properties are masked by street trees and their setting harmed by noise from heavy traffic. However, there are few trees of significant size in the vicinity of the

² Housing SPD 2016

appeal site and, furthermore, these points do not indicate that careful consideration should not be given to proposals which have an impact on the character and appearance of the area.

12. Reference is also made to what the appellant regards as the precedent set by other dormer additions to properties close by. That at No 28, to the west of the appeal site, is of significant size but is set back further from the road frontage than that proposed in this case. It is also closely adjacent to the neighbouring property to the west so that visibility of this addition in the street scene is restricted. The dormer addition to No 33, on the opposite side of the road, relates to a property of different character located considerably further back from the road frontage than the appeal property, with the larger of the two approved dormers facing to the rear and therefore not visible.
13. Overall my view is that these approvals do not set a particular precedent for the present case. I accept that appropriately designed dormer windows, such as that proposed for the rear of the appeal property, can be accommodated without harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This demonstrates that, the key to successful design solutions is careful consideration of the property and its setting.
14. The Government attaches great importance to design. Furthermore, the statutory duty in section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is a matter of considerable importance and weight. In this case whilst the harm caused by the proposed side dormer windows would be significant, it would be less than the substantial harm referred to by the National Planning Policy Framework. However, the public benefits that would accrue, including the suggestion that the proposal would secure the optimum viable use for the building and a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupants of the building, do not outweigh the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.
15. In summary I have found that the proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wandsworth Common Conservation Area. It would conflict with the Wandsworth Development Management Policies Document Policies DMS2 and DMH5, and the CACA&MS, which taken together require the protection of heritage assets, and that roof alterations should be sympathetic to the style of the building.

Conclusion

16. As material considerations do not indicate that I should conclude other than in accordance with the development plan taken as a whole, the appeal is dismissed.

AJ Mageean

INSPECTOR