

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 June 2017

by Clive Tokley MRTPI

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

Decision date: 10 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/D/17/3172787

1 Camden Park, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 4TW

- 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 Owen Clay against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/07395/FULL dated 15 November 2016 was refused by notice dated 16 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is house alterations and extension and new garage.
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Decisions

1. As regards the proposed new garage: - the **appeal is dismissed**.
2. As regards the house alterations and extension: - the **appeal is allowed** and planning permission is granted for house alterations and extension only at 1 Camden Park, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 4TW. The permission is in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/07395/FULL dated 15 November 2016 subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted (house alterations and extension) shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 3073 01 B and 3073 04 A,
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Camden Park Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

The Conservation Area

4. The CA lies within a residential area to the east of the centre of Tunbridge Wells. Within the CA there is a wide variety of housing types with densely-developed terraced and semi-detached housing interspersed with more spacious residential areas. Camden Park is a long and non-continuous looping road that
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partly encloses an open area (also known as Camden Park). On the inside of the "loop" Camden Park (road) is fronted by large houses in large plots dating from the middle of the 19th century. The largest of these dwellings front the western and northern sections of Camden Park and back onto the parkland.

5. The western part of the road is bordered to the west by a narrow undeveloped strip of mainly grassed land that supports a number of trees. Narrow gated accesses through the roadside hedge result in limited views into the strip of land. The ownership of this land appears to coincide with the ownership of the dwellings immediately opposite (including No 1 Camden Park). The undeveloped strip continues roughly northward to the point where the road turns to the east. From this point the outside of Camden Park (the road) is fronted by more modern smaller houses on much smaller plots and the bend marks a distinct change in the character of the road.
6. Within the CA the significance of the area around Camden Park (road) is derived from the low density of the development and the mature vegetation which creates an informal setting for the dwellings. These characteristics contrast with the more densely developed areas to the west and north, both within and outside the CA.

The alterations and extension to the house

7. I consider that the alterations and extension of the dwelling would at least preserve the character and appearance of the CA and would not be harmful to the significance of the heritage asset. I therefore have no reason to disagree with the Council's view that these elements of the proposal are acceptable.

The garage

8. The undeveloped nature of the strip of land to the west of Camden Park makes an important contribution to the character of the area and reinforces the distinctiveness of this part of the CA. The garage would be partly screened by the front hedge but it would be seen above the hedge line and the vehicular access would enable views of the garage from the street. The proposed garage would introduce built development into this strip and in my view this would be materially harmful to the significance of the CA. The character and appearance of the area would be further harmed by the proposed sliding metal gates and the presence of parked vehicles that would inevitably result from the development of the garage.
9. The appellant indicates that additional planting would be carried out on the site; however this would not disguise the presence of the garage and its associated access and parking area and would not overcome my concern about the harmful effect of the proposal on the CA.
10. Paragraph 132 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) indicates that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets (in this case the CA). I consider that the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the CA. In the terms of the Framework I consider that the harm to the heritage asset, whilst material, would be "less than substantial".

11. The appellant indicates the interconnection between the two elements of the proposal with the proposed garage being needed to replace the garaging space lost by the house alterations. I saw the limited size of the existing garage but there is sufficient parking space for vehicles within the immediate grounds of the house. The decision as to whether to carry out the works to the house lies with the appellant and as regards their planning merits there is no interdependency between the two parts of the proposal.
12. I understand the appellant's reasons for wishing to carry out the development; however the remedying of any perceived inadequacy of garage space for the dwelling does not amount to a public benefit sufficient to outweigh the harm to the heritage asset that I have identified.

Conclusions

13. The proposed garage would conflict with the specific policies of the Framework concerning heritage assets and with Policy 4 of the *Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy 2010* and Policy EN5 of the *Tunbridge Wells Local Plan 2006* which indicate that the Borough's heritage assets (and specifically conservation areas) should be conserved and enhanced. The garage would fail to at least preserve the character or appearance of the CA and the harm that would be caused to the heritage asset would not be outweighed by any public benefit. Taking account of all matters I conclude that as regards that aspect of the proposal the appeal should not succeed.
14. I have concluded that the alteration and extensions to the house would be acceptable. The works to the house are physically and functionally separate from the garage and as regards that part of the proposal I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.
15. The permission for alteration and extensions to the house is subject to the normal conditions controlling the commencement of development and identifying the drawings that specifically relate to that part of the proposal. To ensure a satisfactory appearance I have imposed a condition requiring that the external finishes match those of the house.

Clive Tokley

INSPECTOR