



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 June 2017

by Rachael A Bust BSc (Hons) MA MSc LLM MEnvSci MInstLM MCMI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 09 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/17/3171370

67 Wellesley Road, Chiswick, London W4 3AT

- 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 Ms Selena Reekhay against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 01177/67/P3, dated 25 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is the creation of dropped kerb and alterations to front boundary treatment.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary and Procedural Matters

2. There are two different Council referencing systems for this appeal. For the avoidance of doubt I have used the one given on the decision notice.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed parking arrangement on the safety of pedestrians and other road users, and whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Wellesley Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

Safety of pedestrians and other road users

4. The appeal site stands towards the western end of an A classified road called Wellesley Road. The restricted junction to the west means little traffic is travelling eastwards at this point, but, in the absence of any specific vehicle movement data, from my observation on site there was a steady flow of different sizes of vehicles. Consequently I anticipate Wellesley Road carries a moderate flow of vehicles past the site throughout the day.
5. The properties on the northern side of this stretch of Wellesley Road, including the appeal property (No 67), have a limited depth of front garden area. No 67 has a typical front garden area with a depth of approximately 3.5 metres from the rear of the pavement to the wall of the projecting bay window. In comparison, the properties on the southern side of Wellesley Road are set further back from the pavement which provides a deeper frontage area.

6. Although no precise dimensions are illustrated on the submitted plans, from my site visit observations I consider that the proposed parking area is likely to be insufficient to accommodate a typical sized car. The size of the proposed parking area is constrained by the wall to be retained and by the bay window of the property.
7. Policy EC2 of the Hounslow Local Plan (HLP), adopted 2015, requires that proposals for vehicle crossovers (dropped kerbs) be consistent with the Council's adopted policy on vehicle crossovers. The Council states that this requires a parking space to have a depth of 4.8 metres when perpendicular to the road. This is not possible on the appeal site; therefore the standards applicable to parking parallel to the road apply. These require a space to be 4.75 metres in depth and 12 metres in width. The proposed parking area does not meet these required dimensions.
8. I note that the appellant has submitted a swept path diagram to illustrate vehicle movements and show how the proposed parking area could be used. However, the Council is concerned that the vehicle dimensions used in the diagram do not represent a standard sized vehicle.
9. From my site observations it was apparent that to enter and leave the proposed parking area would require a precise execution that drivers are unlikely to achieve each time. Therefore it would be likely to require a significant number of manoeuvres to enter or to leave the parking area. This would be to the detriment of the free flow of traffic and the safety of pedestrians. Alternatively it is likely that a vehicle could park with a portion of it overhanging the pavement. Therefore presenting an obstacle to impede the safe passage of pedestrians.
10. Visibility would be limited by the presence of the existing front wall and pillars at No 67 and the front hedge and wall at No 65. As a consequence of the fact that the designated parking bays occupy around half of the width of the pavement outside No 67 pedestrians are particularly vulnerable from manoeuvring vehicles. This strengthens the need to secure adequate visibility in any new proposed vehicle crossover on this side of Wellesley Road.
11. The appeal proposal does not include pedestrian visibility splays of 2.4 metres from the rear of the pavement and either side of the proposed crossover. Accordingly there would be conflict with the requirements of the Council's adopted policy on vehicle crossovers. Therefore it would have an adverse effect on pedestrian safety. The appellant suggests a solution would be to move the parking bays off the pavement; however, this is not a matter before me.
12. To form the access a section of the parking bay in front of No 67 would be lost, resulting in the effective loss of 2 spaces. Although the appellant has suggested the bay could be lengthened to off-set this loss, there is no mechanism before me to ensure that this could be achieved. As a result, the proposal would reduce parking provision in the area therefore increasing parking stress. The appellant's parking survey acknowledges that parking stress already occurs on weekday afternoons. The reduction in parking provision would be likely to lead to an increase in slow moving vehicles as drivers are looking for a parking space. This in combination with the subsequent manoeuvring would disrupt the free flow of traffic, as would be expected on an A classified road, to the detriment of highway safety.

13. For these reasons I conclude the proposal would compromise the safety of drivers and pedestrians on the highway and so conflict with Policy EC2 of the HLP, which seeks amongst other things, to avoid adverse impacts on the transport network by ensuring compliance with the Council's adopted policy on vehicle crossovers.
14. I appreciate that the appellant feels that parking off the road to the front of the appeal property would be preferable. However, this would not outweigh the harm identified in relation to the safety of pedestrians and other road users.

Character and Appearance of the Wellesley Road Conservation Area

15. The Wellesley Road Conservation Area (WRCA) is an established residential area. Its significance lies, in part, in the way the majority of properties demonstrate typical architectural features of late Victorian/early Edwardian style, such as sash windows, bay windows, recessed front doors, and tiled pedestrian access from the road. The properties in the western end of Wellesley Road, including the appeal property, are a mixture of semi-detached and detached properties. A number of the front gardens have been hard surfaced on the south side of the road. However on the northern side, hard surfacing is not as common. Rather it is characterised by low boundary walls, either topped with iron railings or hedging between pillars. As a consequence the properties on this side of the road retain a relationship between the dwelling and their garden context.
16. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal for the WRCA does identify that the loss of front garden areas to provide off-street car parking is eroding the appearance of the street scene.
17. No 67 is an attractive two-storey semi-detached period property. It has retained many of the features which characterise properties of this era. It is marginally set back from the road to provide a small enclosed front garden which has been hard surfaced. The front boundary comprises a low wall, topped with railings. There is an existing gap of approximately 2.4 metres where a section of wall appears to have previously been removed. However, despite this loss, when taken with the other walls on adjacent properties the boundary treatment contributes to the enclosure in the streetscape, enhances the domestic context of No 67 and adds to the character and appearance of the WRCA and its significance.
18. It is now proposed to widen the existing 2.4 metres opening by a further 1.1 metres by the removal of a further section of boundary wall. The remaining boundary treatment would be less than half of the width of the frontage. To my mind, this would reduce the sense of enclosure in the streetscape and detrimentally affect the appearance of No 67. Furthermore, it would adversely affect the visual appearance and cohesiveness of the character of the properties along the northern side.
19. Moreover, the proposal would mean the open area in front of No 67 would often be occupied by a vehicle, which again would detract from the character and appearance of the property by emphasising the loss of the garden context in which the dwelling would have historically stood. When this concern is taken with the loss of walling, the visual impact of the proposal would adversely affect the character and appearance of this part of Wellesley Road and the WRCA. Accordingly there is conflict with Policies CC1, CC2, CC4, CC5 and SC7

of the HLP, which amongst other things requires new development to not result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the built environment including Conservation Areas.

20. I have had regard to the statutory duties set out in s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. For the reasons above the development would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the WRCA. This harm would be less than substantial when considered against paragraphs 132 and 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework. However, there are no public benefits that would outweigh the harm to the WRCA in this case.

Other matters

21. The appellant has made reference to a number of other decisions within Wellesley Road for dropped kerbs and front garden parking spaces. I note from the dates of these planning permissions that all but one, 110 Wellesley Road, were determined under a previous policy context and prior to the WRCA being designated. In any event, full details of the circumstances that led to these proposals being acceptable have not been provided, so I cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel to this appeal proposal. Nevertheless, I have to determine this appeal on its own planning merits, and their presence does not justify allowing this appeal.

Conclusion

22. Taking all matters into consideration, I conclude that the development would conflict with relevant local and national planning policies and the development plan as a whole. Consequently, the appeal is dismissed.

Rachael A Bust

INSPECTOR