

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 August 2017

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23rd August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/D/17/3176454

66 Hamilton Road, Brentford, London, TW8 0QF

- 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 Artur Hantszel against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref P/2017/1143, dated 15 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 9 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as the increase in size of the basement to include front and rear lightwells; the erection of a single-storey side infill and rear extension; and the erection of a mansard roof extension with three front roof windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are the effects of the proposed extensions on:
 - The character and appearance of the St Paul's Brentford Conservation Area, and
 - The living conditions of the occupiers of No 65 Hamilton Road by way of outlook.

Reasons

3. No 66 is a mid-terraced house situated on the northern side of Hamilton Road. Hamilton Road is characterised by a mix of largely late-Victorian and Edwardian houses that includes detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings with differing styles. No 66 is part of a short terrace that has a ground-floor front bay window and a cornice above the front elevation. It has a small cellar, a small front garden and a moderate-sized rear garden.
 4. The proposed development involves the extension of the cellar to include a front and rear lightwell with patio doors giving access to each; a wrap-around single-storey extension to the side and rear of an existing narrower rear projection; and the creation of a mansard roof with a rear flat-roofed extension to create additional living accommodation at second floor level. At the time of my visit, the wrap around ground-floor rear extension and the mansard roof and roof extension had already been constructed.
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Character and appearance

5. The appellant contends that the principle of a wrap-around side/rear extension has been accepted following approval in a recent appeal decision; that there is a recent basement conversion involving the creation of a front lightwell at No 1 Hamilton Road; and that similar mansard roof extensions have recently been approved by the Council at Nos 67 and 69. I will deal with these matters in turn from the perspective of their effects on the St Paul's Brentford Conservation Area (CA).
6. With regard to the side and rear extension, what has been constructed would appear to be slightly different from the scheme considered satisfactory by the Inspector in the recent appeal (ref APP/P5540/D/16/3151128), and there has been concerns raised by the Council about the relationship of the current proposal to the boundary with No 65. However, some of these concerns appear to relate to party wall issues while the other very limited changes in design are not such that they would conflict with the general conclusions of the Inspector in that earlier case, with regard to the effect of the proposal on the streetscene and the general context of the CA. On this basis, I concur with his conclusions and I do not consider that this element of the proposal, on its own, would have any harmful effect on the character or appearance of the CA.
7. With regard to the proposed extension to the basement, it would appear that the footprint of the basement would be increased by the small amount involved in extending the front to match the ground-floor bay above. There would then be just a small lightwell to both the front and rear, each accessed by glazed patio doors. The appellant indicates that a lightwell exists to the front of No 1 Hamilton Road, and that the front lightwell at No 66 would be covered by a walk-on metal grille to reduce its visibility somewhat. However, the lightwell at No 1 was apparently granted permission over 13 years ago, and there are no other lightwells on similar properties along the road, covered or otherwise.
8. On the basis of the above, I find that the proposed basement extension with large glazed patio doors plus lightwells would be uncharacteristic of the area. Furthermore, I have some concerns that the conversion of the basement to living accommodation, albeit described on the application plans as a cinema, could result in unacceptable living conditions for the occupiers of the house with particular regard to light and outlook, since the room would be only some 2 metres high and the lightwells small. The front lightwell would have reduced light due to the walk-on grille above, and the rear lightwell would be very small and would be surrounded on all sides by walls or a fence to a height of around 2 metres above ground level or more.
9. My most significant concerns relate to the roof extensions. The Inspector in the earlier appeal made key observations regarding the character of the CA. In particular, he noted that the front elevations of the houses are generally very well preserved, and that the roofline is a prominent feature of the CA housing. Furthermore, he found that much of the housing appears of modest scale from the front, and that there was little evidence in the street scene of roof conversions. In his opinion, the area retained a pleasing traditional appearance, and I consider that this continues to be the situation. The loft conversion, as constructed, has involved the removal of an existing butterfly roof, raising its overall height considerably, and increasing its visibility.

10. The appellant notes that permission has been granted for a similar roof extension at No 67, which has not yet been constructed, and also that, since the recent appeal decision, another mansard roof extension has been constructed at No 69. From my site visit, the mansard roof extension at No 69 is not readily visible in the street scene whilst that at No 66 is highly visible from the footpath on the opposite side of the road. In particular, the three front windows appear prominent and out of character with the host property and its surroundings. The appellant has produced photographs comparing the visual impact of the mansard roofs at Nos 66 and 69, though it would appear that the photograph of No 69 was taken from around eye-level, whilst that of No 66 was taken from around road surface level. In any event, the extension at No 66 appears as more intrusive than that at No 69 in the photographs, and significantly more so when seen in the street scene itself.
11. There is a long-standing mansard roof extension at No 65. This, however, was clearly constructed some considerable time ago, and is an unattractive and uncharacteristic feature in the street scene, and should not necessarily be seen as a precedent for further mansard roofs along the road. As with the inspector at the earlier appeal, I accept that the extension at No 66 is less obtrusive than that at the adjacent No 65. However, on the whole, along Hamilton Road, the design integrity of the houses and the traditional roofscape of the street have been largely preserved. I consider that the mansard roof extension at No 66 represents a discordant feature that detracts significantly from the traditional character and appearance of the property and the street scene, and that it causes harm to the heritage asset that is the CA.
12. On this issue, therefore, I conclude that the ground-floor side/rear extension would have little or no effect, in itself, on the character or appearance of the area. The basement extension and lightwells would be out of character, albeit to a limited extent, and I also have some concerns regarding the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of future occupiers by virtue of the limited height and light in the living accommodation created. Finally, I find that the mansard roof, by virtue of its scale and the prominence of the three front windows, is an unsympathetic addition to the house. It is prominent in the street scene and a discordant feature in the roofscape along Hamilton Road.
13. Overall, therefore, I find that the scale and design of the proposals as a whole would be harmful to the character of what is essentially a small terraced house. In particular, the mansard roof is detrimental to the appearance of the roofscape of Hamilton Road. The proposed development therefore does not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the St Paul's Brentford Conservation Area. Moreover, it would conflict with Policies CC1, CC2, CC4 and SC7 of the Council's Local Plan (LP) which require development, including residential extensions and alterations, to sustain, conserve and enhance areas of high quality design, including conservation areas, and to respond to the context of the host building and the surrounding area.

Living conditions

14. The Council has indicated that the mansard roof and the proposed basement extension would not be harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring buildings. I concur with that view. This issue, therefore,

revolves chiefly round that part of the proposal that relates to the wrap-around side and rear ground-floor extension.

15. The approval in principle of this element of the proposal at No 66 has already been established. However, the Council has raised issues relating to the design of the extension, as submitted, along the party wall with No 65. The party wall issue itself is, of course, not a planning matter, but the Council contends that the side wall of the extension, as shown on the submitted plans, would intrude on the property of No 65, and would lead to an increase in the sense of enclosure over the situation previously approved. The plans as submitted do appear a little confusing. However, the height of the wall is only around 2 metres at the boundary and, as built, it would appear not to encroach onto the neighbouring plot, at least towards the top of the wall. In any case, I do not consider that the proposal would significantly increase any harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 65, by way of outlook and sense of enclosure, over and above the effects that would have arisen from the earlier approved scheme.
16. On this basis, I find that the scheme would not be significantly detrimental to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 65 Hamilton Road by way of outlook. It would not conflict with Policies CC2 and SC7 of the LP, which require development to minimise the harm to the residential amenities of adjacent dwellings.

Conclusion

17. In conclusion, I find that the proposed extensions would not be significantly harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 65 Hamilton Road by way of outlook, but that they would be harmful to the character and appearance of the St Paul's Brentford Conservation Area. Accordingly, I dismiss this appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR