
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2017

by Graham M Garnham BA BPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 04 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E5900/D/17/3175920
5 Mariners Mews, London, E14 3EQ

- 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 T Khakee against the decision of London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council.
 - The application Ref PA/17/00639, dated 1 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 26 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is widening of existing second floor window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. I consider that this is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the property and the terrace.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a 4 storey, brick built terraced house that is part of an award winning 1980s residential development alongside the River Thames. The terrace has been designed as a unified whole with stepped gable ends facing towards the river, shared by adjoining pairs of houses. The two middle pairs in the terrace of 8 houses have semi-circular bay windows at first floor level, rendered and painted a light colour. The roof of each bay contains a small walled patio, surmounted by a light weight canopy structure that has a semi-circular roof, mirroring the bay below. The rear of the terrace has seen a number of changes at ground floor level. On the front, where the appeal proposal is sited, changes are largely confined to widening some of the ground floor openings and changing some of the windows and patio doors on the upper floors within the original openings. The terrace displays a coherent and high quality design with a strong rhythm given by regularly spaced features within a whole that is unified by carefully considered proportions, forms and materials.
 4. No.5 is of a pair with no.6. Although the proposal is described as widening a second floor "window", the supporting statement and drawings make it clear that it is the patio doors that are to be widened. Exact dimensions have not
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been given, but it appears to me from the drawings to be a significant increase in width. The existing timber frames would be replaced with a timber composite of narrower width and there would be a higher proportion of glazing in the opening.

5. The appellant says that this small change would be barely visible from a public viewpoint, and would be shrouded by the balcony wall and canopy structure. It is claimed that it would also add interest to the external elevation and create a more appealing solid to void ratio.
6. In my experience, piecemeal and ad hoc changes to a well-conceived piece of architectural design rarely achieve any improvement, and are usually detrimental. I consider that this is a case in point. Moreover, the canopy structure is supported on slender poles, giving a largely unimpeded view of the new patio doors, which would be seen clearly from the walkway, and no doubt at greater distance from the river. I also attach little weight to the argument that widening the patio doors would be more in keeping with the recently approved widening of the ground floor opening. In contrast to this proposal, the ground floor is largely obscured by planting and various structures that appear to be part of a landscaping scheme. Neither at the appeal site nor elsewhere along the terrace where similar ground floor changes have been made is there a significant, prominent or harmful impact on the architectural integrity of the houses or the terrace.
7. I am also not persuaded that growing appreciation of the value of natural light inside a house should be a determinative consideration. The fact that it is not a dual aspect room is not exceptional – most rooms are not – while its use is as a bedroom, where enhanced levels of natural lighting are not always necessary. Consequently I find that this argument is substantially outweighed by the harm I have found to the external elevation.
8. Overall and on balance, I conclude that the proposal would have a significantly detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the property and the terrace, which demonstrate a high standard of design quality. It would be in conflict with the development plan policies cited by the Council. Policy 7.4 of The London Plan (2016) requires a high quality design response to local character. Policy SP 10 of the Tower Hamlets Core Strategy (2010) also promotes good design principles that respect local context and use high quality architecture. Policy DM24 of the Managing Development Document (2013) elaborates on these principles which include, among other things, being sensitive to and enhancing local character and setting, and taking account of surrounding design details and elements. I further regard protecting and retaining a strong and high quality architectural identity is not so much imposing architectural styles, as suggested by the appellant, but that it is more appropriate to follow the National Planning Policy Framework by refusing development of poor design.
9. Planning permission should therefore be withheld and I dismiss the appeal.

G Garnham

INSPECTOR