The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2017

by C Cresswell BSc (Hons) MA MBA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/17/3176555
172 Streatham Hill, London SW2 4RU

- 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 Ashraf Ismail against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
- The application Ref 17/00698/FUL, dated 14 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 13 April 2017.
- The development proposed is new dormer roof to inner rear roof section.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Streatham High Road and Streatham Hill Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to an older style property which is situated at the end of a small terrace. It has a ground floor commercial unit with the upper storeys in residential use. The property faces Streatham High Road, although the rear elevation can be seen from Sternhold Avenue. It forms part of the Streatham High Road and Streatham Hill Conservation Area, the significance of which is mainly derived from the architectural quality of the historic buildings.

4. This part of Streatham High Road is a busy shopping area which contains a high proportion of older buildings. However, there are also contemporary properties visible within the street scene. This includes the large, modern building next to the appeal property, which was undergoing construction works at the time of my site visit. Sternhold Avenue also contains contemporary buildings at this point, with small commercial units on one side of the road and high rise apartment buildings on the other.

5. The appeal property retains much of its original appearance, including the pattern of fenestration in the upper stories and the integrity of the front and rear roof slopes. As such, it is consistent with the architectural style of other properties within the terrace, which occupies a relatively prominent position on the corner of the street. The appeal property therefore makes a direct contribution to the significant qualities of the Conservation Area, despite its close proximity to modern developments.

6. It is proposed to extend the upper floor of the property. This would involve installing rooflights on the Streatham High Road frontage. As the other properties in the terrace do not have similar rooflights, the proposal would interfere with the consistency of the terrace. However, the rooflights would be relatively inconspicuous features due to their small size and minimal projection above the plane of the roof slope. As such, they would not undermine the appearance of the Conservation Area to a significant extent.

7. The development also involves constructing a dormer extension on the rear roof slope of the property. As this would run across the whole width of the roof and would not be set back from the eaves, it would appear relatively large and bulky in the context of the roof slope. Therefore, even though the materials would reflect those in the appeal property, the dormer would clearly disrupt the architectural consistency of the terrace.

8. I appreciate that the dormer would be seen in the context of the modern high rise buildings immediately adjacent to the appeal property. Indeed, I understand that the Council granted permission for historic buildings to be demolished in order to make way for this new development. While I am not aware of the full circumstances under which this development gained approval, the introduction of contemporary buildings within this part of the Conservation Area does not undermine the significance of the older buildings.

9. In my view, the rear elevation of the terrace is a valuable component of the Sternhold Avenue street scene. Due to its open aspect, it is visible from a number of vantage points and forms a prominent feature when approaching the junction with Streatham High Road. For the reasons outlined above, the historic appearance of the terrace would be undermined by the introduction of the proposed dormer. Although the development would be a relatively small feature in the context of the wider surroundings, it would nonetheless represent an incremental change which would erode the significant qualities of the Conservation Area.

10. In reaching this decision, I am mindful that the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, 'great weight' should be given to the asset's conservation. Appropriately high design standards should therefore be applied.

11. However, while I have found that the proposal would cause harm to the Conservation Area, the harm I have identified would be less than substantial (as defined in the Framework) and thus paragraph 134 advises that this harm should be weighed against any public benefits associated with the development. In this particular case I fully appreciate the appellant's wish to improve their property to create more desirable living conditions. Nonetheless, as these benefits of this would be private in nature the harm to the heritage asset would not be outweighed.

12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The development would conflict with Policies Q5, Q11 and Q22 of the Lambeth Local Plan 2015 which promote local distinctiveness and appropriate standards of design. There would also be conflict with the Lambeth Building Alterations and Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2015 which has similar objectives.

13. For the above reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Cresswell

INSPECTOR