
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2017

by J D Westbrook BSc(hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y5420/D/17/3181584
145 Castlewood Road, London, N15 6BD

- 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 Mrs Miriam Goldman against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Haringey.
 - The application Ref HGY/2017/1585, dated 26 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 July 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as an excavation to provide a basement.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues in this case are the effect of the proposed basement on:
 - the character and appearance of the area around Castlewood Road, and
 - the living conditions of the occupiers of the house by way of light and outlook.

Reasons

3. No 145 is a mid-terraced, two-storey house situated on the western side of Castlewood Road. In common with a large number of houses in the wider area, it has a large full-width front dormer. It also has a full-width, rear dormer extension and a long single-storey, full width, rear extension. It has a small front yard and a rear garden that is apparently around 6 metres long by 6 metres wide. The proposed development would involve the excavation of a basement beneath the full extent of the ground floor of the house, including the rear extension.
4. The area around Castlewood Road and surrounding streets contains many houses with large front or rear dormer extensions, and often both. However, at the time of my visit, there did not appear to be any evidence of basement extensions, and this type of development cannot, therefore, be considered characteristic. The original house has already been extended by a significant amount in the form of front and rear dormers, creating 3 second floor bedrooms, and a 5 metre long, ground floor extension. The remaining rear garden is relatively small. The submitted plans indicate that the proposed basement would have front and rear light wells. Each would appear to be a little over 1 metre in depth, with the front lightwell being some 2 metres wide and the rear lightwell some 3 metres wide.

5. The appellant indicates that the additional habitable space in the basement would provide for the needs of a large family, and I have some sympathy with her situation. The appellant also notes that the proposal does not provide any more bedroom space. However, there can, of course, be no guarantees that any future occupiers would not, in fact, use the new space created for the purpose of additional bedrooms, and I have significant concerns that the proposal could result in an overdevelopment of the site, including some loss of the already relatively small amounts of outdoor garden and other space. This would be harmful to the established character of the area which is essentially one of modest-sized terraced houses in moderate plots.
6. Furthermore, whilst every proposal must be assessed on its own merits, to allow this development, which would appear to be the first of its type in the vicinity, could encourage the submission of further similar proposals which would be progressively more difficult for the Council to resist and which could cause cumulative harm to the character of the area. This adds weight to my conclusion that the proposed development would be detrimental to the character of the area around Castlewood Road and its surroundings, by way of overdevelopment on an already heavily developed and limited plot.
7. The appellant has provided a Basement Impact Assessment which indicates that any predicted damage to neighbouring properties would generally be "negligible", with some areas of "very slight", provided that appropriate safeguards were included within the construction works. Nevertheless, this likely lack of significant damage does not outweigh the harm to the character of the area that would result from the proposal.
8. In addition, there is limited information before me concerning daylight, sunlight or ventilation factors related to this proposal. There have been some figures produced in an email relating to daylight factors only, but none relating to sunlight or ventilation. The basement would extend the full depth of the house – approaching 14 metres; the windows would not be central to the rooms; and it would be completely below ground level with a very restricted outlook. The daylight figures provided indicate that the ADF would be only at or around the BRE recommended minimum level. On this basis, I have concerns that the quality of the additional living accommodation provided could effectively be below an acceptable standard in terms of a combination of light and outlook.
9. In conclusion, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character of the area around Castlewood Road, and it would be unlikely to provide a good quality living accommodation by way of light and outlook. It would conflict with emerging Policy DM12 of the Council's Development Management DMD which requires that alterations to residential buildings should respect and/or complement the form and setting of the original building. Insofar as this Policy reflects general policy on design matters in the National Planning Policy Framework, and in particular, requirements that development should add to the overall quality of the area and respond to local character, I accord it significant weight.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR