

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 July 2019

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/W/18/3218647

2 Parkhurst Road, Bexley DA5 1AR

- 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 Melbond against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 18/02235/FUL, dated 31 July 2018, was refused by notice dated 2 October 2018.
 - The development proposed is five bedroom house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Parkhurst Conservation Area; and the effect of the proposed development on parking and highway safety.

Reasons

Parkhurst Conservation Area

3. The Parkhurst Conservation Area comprises residential roads, which together represent an early example of suburban development related to the expansion of the London commuter rail network. The area contains a good variety of period properties built in the second half of the 19th century. The estate is laid out with spacious curved roads, bounded by properties with relatively large front gardens, trees and broad plots.
 4. No 2 Parkhurst Road is located in the south-eastern corner of the conservation area in a road that includes Victorian properties, including No 2, on the northern side, while more modern properties, which are outside the area's boundary, are on the opposite side. The appeal site is an area of land to the side of No 2, currently occupied by a garage, with a more recent dwelling on the other side, No 2A, which appears to have been built in part of the rear garden of a dwelling fronting onto Hartford Road.
 5. *The Parkhurst Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* indicates that one of the elements that contributes to the area's open character and
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appearance is spaces between properties, with views of greenery and trees beyond¹. This is reiterated in the document, which says that views between buildings are a particularly significant attribute of the conservation area, helping to create and enhance the spaciousness and leafy suburban character². This broader characteristic of the area is largely reflected in the layout of properties along Parkhurst Road, which generally have generous spaces between detached dwellings or paired semi-detached properties, enabling views of trees and greenery to the rear.

6. The appeal site is a relatively large area of side garden between two dwellings that enables views over the single storey garage to the rear, with trees and other greenery visible from the public realm. While this represents a much larger gap than is typical between properties, the proposal would result in a dwelling that would substantively infill this gap, leaving limited space to the properties either side. As such, it would not reflect the characteristic layout of properties in the area, and would fail to preserve any of the open aspect and views to the rear that currently exist. I note in regard of this type of development that the *Area Appraisal and Management Plan* says that further subdivision of the large plots to provide backland or infill developments would generally be inappropriate, eroding the traditional layout and plot sizes³.
7. There are currently a number of trees to the front of the site in the position of the proposed parking spaces to serve the new dwelling. While these do not represent individual specimens of particular significance or quality, as a group they contribute to the character of the area, as described. This is particularly the case given their prominence to the front of the site and in contrast to the harder, urbanised appearance of the garage blocks on the opposite side of the road. As such, their loss to provide an area of hardstanding for vehicle parking would fail to preserve the area's character and appearance.
8. The proposed dwelling includes two dormer windows to the front roof slope and one to the rear. The *Area Appraisal and Management Plan* says that no new dormers should be visible from the street either at the front or to the side⁴, but it also says with regard to positive aspects of the area that a number of buildings have gabled dormers, which make an important contribution to the skyline⁵. In this case, the front dormers would be proportionate and of traditional design and appearance, similar to those that already exist within the street scene. As such, this detail of the proposed dwelling would not be uncharacteristic or otherwise incongruous.
9. The appellant contends that the relatively recent dwelling, No 2A, was permitted after designation of the conservation area. However, that does not have a direct bearing on my consideration of the current proposal, which I have determined on its merits in the circumstances that currently pertain.
10. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the proposed dwelling would have an unacceptably harmful effect in this location and so would not preserve the character and appearance of the Parkhurst Conservation Area.

¹ Paragraph 4.7.

² Paragraph 6.8.

³ Paragraph 7.28.

⁴ Paragraph 7.29.

⁵ Paragraph 7.16.

Consequently, it is contrary to the following development plan policies: Policies 7.4 and 7.8 of The London Plan, concerning the effect of development on local character and heritage assets; and Policies ENV39, ENV46 and H8 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and Policies CS05 and CS19 of its Core Strategy, which concern amongst other matters the effect of development on local character and which require the protection of heritage assets, including conservation areas, from inappropriate development. These policies are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

11. In reaching this conclusion I am particularly mindful of the statutory requirement that in exercising planning functions in conservation areas special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area⁶.
12. Where there is a harmful effect on the significance of a designated heritage asset which is less than substantial harm, which would apply in this case, the Framework requires the harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal⁷. While the appellant contends that the proposal will result in a good quality family home in an accessible location, this is insufficient reason to outweigh the material harm to a designated heritage asset.

Parking and Highway Safety

13. The submitted plans show two on-site parking spaces in front of the proposed dwelling. The appellant explains that the reference to four spaces on the application form relates to two spaces at No 2 and two for the new dwelling as shown on the plans.
14. Policy T17 of the UDP concerns vehicle parking and says that provision should be made in accordance with standards included in the plan. For dwellings with five or more bedrooms as in this case, the requirement is for two off-street spaces, which is what is proposed. I note that the Council also has concerns about the effect of on-street parking due to the site being within the Bexley Station Controlled Parking Zone.
15. However, given that the proposal appears to meet the requisite standards in the development plan and there are opportunities to access public transport in this area, I find no evidential basis to conclude on this issue that the proposal would result in material harm to parking and highway safety in this location. As such, there is no conflict with Policy T17, as described; or with Policy ENV39 of the UDP concerning the built environment, which includes the requirement that development should make adequate provision for vehicle parking; or with Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy, which concerns achieving an integrated and sustainable transport system, including with regard to parking; or with London Plan Policy 6.3, which concerns the effects of development on transport capacity.

Other Matters

16. I have had regard to all the representations made by interested parties, both for and against the proposal. These do not, however, raise any additional

⁶ Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

⁷ Paragraph 196.

matters in relation to the main issues in this appeal that would lead me to reach a different overall conclusion.

17. I acknowledge the appellant's comment that there was no engagement by the Council with regard to the proposal before the decision was made. However, this is a procedural matter that is outside the scope of this appeal.

Conclusion

18. I have found in the appellant's favour with regard to one main issue, concerning the effect on parking and highway safety. However, this is not sufficient to outweigh the material harm that has been found with regard to the effect on a designated heritage asset, and the conflict with the development plan. There are no other material considerations that outweigh the conflict with the development plan and, therefore, it is concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR