
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 October 2019

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/19/3232795

Ground Floor, 4 St James's Road, Gravesend DA11 0HE

- 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 Simon Johnston against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 20190224, dated 6 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is the existing timber sash windows in white finish to be replaced with PVCu traditional tilt sash windows in white finish.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal documents refer to the street name as both 'St James Road' and 'St James's Road'. On my site visit, I noted a street sign confirming the road name as 'St James's Road'. I have therefore used this spelling above.
3. I have noted references to the London Plan within some of the appeal documentation. However, I have been unable to give this document weight in my considerations owing to the appeal site not being in an area covered by this plan.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposed replacement windows would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Overcliffe Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal site consists of a dwelling located within a residential area, and the above CA. The significance of the CA is derived, in part, from the presence of significantly proportioned, two-storey buildings dating from the 19th century. A large proportion of the buildings within the CA retain traditional architectural features, including wooden windows. The appeal site is identified in the Overcliffe Conservation Area Appraisal (2009) as being a key unlisted building.
6. The proposed windows would be made from PVCu, which contrasts with the wooden form of window frames that are prevalent elsewhere within the CA, including the ground floor of the appeal site. Consequently, the proposed

development would erode the traditional form of architecture that defines the character and appearance of the CA.

7. The existing ground floor window frames, in addition to a number elsewhere within the vicinity, feature slim wooden elements meaning that windows have a more vertical emphasis. This defining characteristic would be eroded by the proposed windows. This is on account of the proposed PVCu frames having much thicker elements, which create a more notable break between window panes. The development would therefore result in an erosion of the existing vertical emphasis.
8. I have noted the appellant's suggestion that PVCu windows have evolved over time in terms of design and quality. However, the proposed development would result in the removal of the traditional form of architecture present within the appeal site, and elsewhere.
9. My attention has been drawn to some properties within the CA, in addition to the upper floor of the appeal site, which feature PVCu window frames. Whilst I acknowledge their presence, I note that they occur relatively infrequently within the CA. Therefore, the prevailing characteristic of the CA is the presence of traditional wooden windows.
10. In the case of those windows within the appeal site, these are located on the first-floor of the building and therefore less prominent when viewed from street level. For these reasons, and the fact that I do not appear to have full information regarding their planning circumstances, I do not find that the presence of PVCu windows on site and elsewhere within the CA requires me to set aside my previous observations.
11. I have found that harm would be caused to the CA. The harm to the CA would be less than substantial, taking into account paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework. I am therefore required to balance this harm against any public benefits. Some benefits would arise from the fact that the existing windows would be replaced and potentially result in a reduced environmental impact, however, these benefits are relatively small and outweighed by the identified harm.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposed development fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. The development therefore would not comply with the requirements of Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014); and Policy TC3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994). These policies, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new developments preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance and setting of heritage assets; that the form of development should be derived from the local context; and make positive impacts to conservation areas.

Other Matters

13. I acknowledge that the proposed windows may be easier to maintain over time than the existing wooden windows. However, this matter is unlikely to give rise to sufficient public benefits necessary to offset the previously identified harm.
14. It has been stated that no objections were received to the proposed development from the occupiers of neighbouring properties. Although this is a matter of note, representations are only one matter that must be considered in

assessing a proposed development. I therefore do not find that this matter allows me to set aside my previous concerns.

Conclusion

15. For the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR