



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2019

by Andrew Bremford BSc (Hons) MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/W/19/3235889

Swift Court, Alma Grove, London SE1 5ER

- 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 Breakshore Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 19/AP/1696, dated 20 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as the 're-arrangement and enlargement of existing flatted development to provide 3 new residential units resulting in 7 residential units in total with development including the construction of a mansard extension to the rear wing fronting Alma Grove and the conversion of the existing basement with front lightwell to create a maisonette unit consistent with works allowed on appeal on the 4 April 2019 (APP/5840/W/18/3214086) plus the provision of a mansard roof extension to main building fronting Southwark Park Road to enable a 2 bedroom 3 person apartment to be introduced'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Thorburn Square Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Swift Court (No 68 Southwark Park Road) is a three-storey building, with a two-storey rear wing, located in a prominent position at the corner of Alma Grove and Southwark Park Road, within the Thorburn Square Conservation Area (CA). It is taller than the adjacent terrace of seven dwellings along Southwark Park Road. As such, in combination with No 52 Southwark Park Road which is a building of similar height, it forms one of a pair of 'bookend' properties to the row of terraced houses. Thus, the building contributes positively to the appearance of a balanced frontage along this part of Southwark Park Road. Swift Court is also taller than the terraced dwellings along Alma Grove.
4. The significance of the CA is as a notable surviving example of mid to late 19th century terraced housing which once occupied the area of Bermondsey. The Thorburn Square Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted in 2012. Amongst the key character features referred to is the historic street pattern

with groups of buildings that combine into frontages that define streets, spaces and views. Swift Court, before it was converted to residential use, was a street corner public house and as a result of its position and design characteristics is identified as being a key unlisted building. Thus, it forms an integral and important part of the character of the conservation area.

5. The proposal includes several elements that were previously allowed at appeal¹, including a mansard roof extension to the rear wing fronting onto Alma Grove. However, it would also introduce a mansard roof extension to the main part of the building that did not form part of that permission. This would result in a four-storey building which would be significantly taller than the adjacent terraced dwellings and No 52. Consequently, the development would disrupt the balanced appearance of the terraced row of properties fronting onto Southwark Park Road. It would also appear disproportionately tall within views along Alma Grove. Overall, by virtue of its size the proposed mansard roof extension, notwithstanding that it would be set behind the existing parapet wall, would add a bulky and somewhat discordant form of development to the host building such that it would appear conspicuous and dominant within the street-scene.
6. My attention has been drawn to other buildings of varying scales and architectural styles, including a tower block, north of Southwark Park Grove. However, these buildings are not within the CA. Reference has also been made to the mansard attics of the adjacent terrace of seven houses along Southwark Park Road, however these houses are smaller in scale and the mansard attics are subservient features to the main part the building.
7. For the above reasons, I conclude the development would introduce a visually incongruous feature that would draw the eye and be harmful to the established and historic pattern of development in the CA. The statutory duty in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is clear that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
8. In light of this and my findings above the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Therefore, it would conflict with Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan 2016; Policy 12 of the Southwark Core Strategy 2011; Policies 3.12, 3.15 and 3.16 of the Southwark Plan 2007, and the expectations of the Framework which, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development affecting heritage assets conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form and scale, and have regard to the local character.
9. The proposal would have a detrimental effect on the significance of the designated heritage asset. In respect of paragraph 196 of the Framework, the harm to the CA would be 'less than substantial'.
10. The Framework requires such harm to be balanced against any public benefits of the proposal. There would be a modest public benefit associated with the

¹ Reference APP/5840/W/18/3214086

provision of three additional units of residential accommodation. I have afforded this moderate weight in favour of the development. However, this public benefit would be significantly outweighed by the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the CA.

Other Matters

11. The proposed development would not be unacceptable as regards accommodation standards and would not adversely impact upon the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, although these matters attract neutral weight.
12. None of the other matters raised alter or outweigh my overall conclusion on the main issue.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Bremford

INSPECTOR