
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2019

by Stuart Willis BA Hons MSc PGCE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/D/19/3234260

23 Wycherley Close, Blackheath SE3 7QH

- 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 Mark Spooner against the decision of Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 19/0521/HD, dated 12 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have taken the description of development in the banner heading above from the application form. While different to that on the decision notice and appeal form, no confirmation that a change was agreed has been provided.

Main Issue

3. The main issue of the appeal is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Blackheath Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within the CA. As such I have had regard to the duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance.
5. From my observations, and the Greenwich and Blackheath Conservation Areas Management Strategy and Conservation Guidance (guidance), I consider that the significance of the CA lies, in part in the largely linear street formation with links and views to and from Vanbrugh Park. There is diversity in the design and scale of properties within the CA. Nevertheless, individual streets and blocks of development generally have a consistent style and appearance. One prevailing feature to the pattern of development across the CA is the unaltered roofscapes. The appeal site and adjacent properties are more modern than some in the CA. Nonetheless, they make a positive contribution to the significance of the CA due to the simplicity of their form and unbroken roofscape.

6. The proposed dormer would reflect some aspects of the guidance in the Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) being set in from the boundary of the property, with a sloping roof and materials to match the existing dwelling. Notwithstanding this, the single large dormer would fill much of the roof slope and extend up to the ridge level of the main roof. In the absence of any similar features at nearby properties it would be an alien feature and dominate the roofscape of the row. Furthermore, the opening within the dormer would be discordant with the existing uniform pattern and proportions of windows on the rear elevation of the appeal property and others in the same row.
7. There would be limited close range views of the dormer from the public realm due to the intervening built form and vegetation. Nonetheless, it would be prominent from nearby properties, paths and parking areas. The disruption to the roofscape would also be seen in views from the edge of Vanbrugh Park. The incongruity of the dormer and its size would draw the eye. Moreover, that a proposal may be screened is not a reason to allow development that is inherently unacceptable.
8. The Council have not raised concerns over the rooflights to the front roof slope. Given the presence of similar features on other properties in the row, I have reached the same finding.
9. For the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), the CA is a designated heritage asset. Within the overall context, it is considered that the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of this. The Framework indicates that such harm is to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal. However, great weight should be given to an asset's conservation.
10. While it has been suggested that the proposal would enhance the appearance of the area, I have found this would not be the case. I appreciate that the appellant wishes to extend the property to provide additional accommodation for their growing family. I also note the suitability of the location for their education, work and family commitments. While comments are made regarding the affordability of alternative housing nearby, there is limited information provided on the matter. In any event these would represent private rather than public benefits. That highway alignments, topography and landscape features would remain unchanged is a neutral impact.
11. As such, on the basis of the information before me, in this instance the public benefits would not outweigh the identified material harm to the designated heritage asset.
12. Consequently, the scheme would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. The proposal would conflict with the design and conservation aims of Policy 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan, Policies DH1, DH3, DH(a) and DH(h) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies, the SPD, the guidance and the Framework.

Other Matters

13. I appreciate that the appellant sought to engage with a local architect and modified the scheme following advice from the Council. Notwithstanding this,

and comments regarding the setting of a precedent, I have assessed the scheme on its own merits and I have found harm would arise from it.

14. The Framework indicates that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the application of policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed. Designated heritage assets are an example of such assets and the proposal is contrary to the relevant policies of the Framework in regard to these.

Conclusion

15. For the reason given above and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Stuart Willis

INSPECTOR