
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2020

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/D/19/3239116
145 Gordon Road, London SE15 3RT

- 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 Sharon Simpson against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 19/AP/2312, dated 29 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 25 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is an additional storey to form a mansard roof to facilitate two additional rooms and an ensuite bathroom.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building, and whether it would preserve or enhance the Nunhead Green Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property lies within the Nunhead Green Conservation Area (the Conservation Area). I therefore have a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (paragraph 184). It goes on to advise that any harm or loss requires clear and convincing justification (paragraph 194) and that any harm that is less than substantial must be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal (paragraph 196).
4. The Conservation Area Appraisal has not been provided to me, although the Council's officer report and the appellant's statement both refer to it and include extracts. From my site visit and the evidence before me, I consider that the significance of the Conservation Area derives, in part, from the extensive preservation of its 19th and early 20th century two-storey terraced housing. While there are differences in appearance and roof types between residential blocks, the consistency of design and appearance within individual terraces is a significant feature of the Area.

5. 145 Gordon Road is a two-storey dwelling within a terrace of similar houses. The appeal property and its neighbours have butterfly roofs concealed behind a front parapet wall, an arrangement found widely in the Conservation Area, and as such they contribute to its significance.
6. The proposal is to replace the existing butterfly roof, as well as the pitched roof of the rear outrigger, with an additional storey under a mansard roof. This would allow the creation of two new rooms (a bedroom and a study) and an ensuite bathroom. The existing front parapet wall would be retained, and the mansard roof set approximately 1.2m behind it. This setback would limit views of the mansard roof from the pavement in front of the appeal property. However, it would be visible in views from the pavement on the opposite side of Gordon Road, and would be prominent when viewed from within Dr Harold Moody Park opposite, and from Sturdy Road across the corner of the park. In these slightly longer views, the single mansard roof would be a dominant and obtrusive feature which would appear incongruous when seen in the context of the otherwise uniform block of houses. Although the proposed development would be carried out using materials which would complement the existing building, this would not mitigate the discordant effect of the roof's bulk and positioning.
7. Furthermore, I am not persuaded that because the existing roof is not visible from the street it does not contribute to the aesthetic character of the area. Butterfly roofs are a feature which are part of the traditional and consistent character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As a consequence I consider that its loss would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.
8. The appellant has indicated that the development would provide additional living space for her family, which includes a child with a disability. While I am sympathetic on this point, no further evidence has been offered to support it. It can therefore only carry limited weight in my assessment, as personal circumstances rarely outweigh planning concerns. I am also mindful that it is likely the proposed development would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be relevant.
9. The appellant has also drawn my attention to a number of examples of mansard and similar roofs elsewhere within the Conservation Area. I do not know the full circumstances in which these schemes have come into being, nor which planning policies were in force at the time and against which they were appraised. However, I was able to view the example at 86-88 Gordon Road at the time of my site visit, and saw in that case the block as a whole maintains a consistent roofline. I also viewed the example at 147 Evelina Road, which I understand to have been approved relatively recently, and this appears to have filled in the space between the earlier mansard roof approved at 145 Evelina Road and the adjacent taller building at 4 Nunhead Green. They therefore appear somewhat different from the case before me. No further information was provided in respect of the other examples. In any event, I have assessed the proposal on its own merits and find it to be materially harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.
10. I conclude that the development would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the host building and the Nunhead Green Conservation Area. In the Framework's terms, the harm to the heritage asset would be less than

substantial, and must therefore be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme. While I acknowledge that there would be private benefits to the appellant from being able to enlarge her home, there are no public benefits arising which would outweigh the harm I have identified.

11. The proposal would therefore conflict with Strategic Policy 12 of the 2011 Southwark Core Strategy, and with Saved Policies 3.12, 3.13 and 3.16 of the 2007 Southwark Plan. Together these policies seek to ensure that development demonstrates high quality of design, including through its height, scale and massing, and that development preserves the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. For the same reasons the proposal would conflict with guidance in the Framework. The proposal is also contrary to advice in the Council's adopted 2015 Supplementary Planning Document on Residential Design Standards, which indicates that roof extensions will not be permitted where there is an unbroken run of butterfly roofs, or where the roofline is exposed to long views from public spaces and a roof extension would have a detrimental impact on that view.

Other Matters

12. The proposal would not be harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties. I note also the support for the proposal from several of the appellant's neighbours, many of whom have indicated that they would wish to carry out similar development to that proposed in this appeal. However, neither of these factors outweighs the harm to the Conservation Area and the conflict with the development plan which I have identified.

Conclusion

13. I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan, and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. For this reason the appeal is dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector