
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 January 2020

by Mr D.R McCreery MA BA (Hons) MRTPI

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H5390/W/19/3239131
298-300 Munster Road, London SW6 6BH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Roundbell Ltd against the Council of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.
 - The application Ref 2019/02307/FUL, is dated 30 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is a roof extension to create a 2 bedroom flat.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission is refused for a roof extension to create a 2 bedroom flat.

Procedural Matter

2. This appeal is made as no notice of a decision on the application for planning permission for the proposed development was given within the statutory period (or within an extended period agreed in writing). The appeal will therefore consider whether planning permission should be granted, or refused, for the proposal.
3. In the Statement of Case that responds to this appeal the Council have given their assessment of the proposed development. The assessment includes consideration of a full range of issues, most of which evidence suggests are not in disagreement between the main parties. The exceptions to this are the matters of whether the design of the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area, and whether the internal living space would provide acceptable living conditions for future residents.
4. As these 2 issues appear to be the only matters of disagreement between the main parties, I will therefore consider them first. It is only if the proposed development is found to be acceptable in relation to these issues that it will be necessary to go on to fully conclude on the other issues relating to the proposed development.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:

- the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area.
- whether the proposed development would provide acceptable living conditions for future residents in terms of the provision of internal living space.
- whether the proposed development is otherwise acceptable, in particular, its impact on the living conditions of nearby occupants, on local highway conditions, on local air quality, and whether suitable provision is made for cycle and refuse storage.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal property sits within a short group of 4 buildings at the junction of Munster Road and Chaldon Road. The group of buildings are arranged over 3 storeys and forms part of a longer terrace that steps down to 2 storey buildings as the terrace moves away from the Chaldon Road junction. Most of the buildings within the terrace appear to be commercial in nature at ground floor level, which is consistent with the wider character of this part of Munster Road. Chaldon Road is more residential in character but becomes increasingly commercial in nature as it gets towards the junction with Munster Road.
7. The appearance of the buildings within the terrace, including the appeal property, is generally traditional – with ground floor shop fronts of varying designs and upper floor windows of traditional proportions. The appeal property is distinguished from the other 3 properties within the group as it is wider, it has a front elevation that features exposed brickwork rather than render, and it has more distinctive window details. The long and narrow window that spans the first and second floor levels is particularly distinctive. These features give the building additional prominence within the group and the street scene.
8. The proposed development would introduce an extension at roof level to create a new 2 bedroomed residential unit. The unit would be accessed via an existing entrance from Munster Road that currently provides access to the existing commercial space that would be retained. A new door to the existing shopfront is proposed that would provide additional access at ground floor level.
9. The extension would sit immediately behind the existing parapet wall to the front of the appeal property and to the rear would run flush with the existing building. The extension would cover most of the existing roof space, except for a small area to the front that would be retained to provide a terrace that would serve as amenity space for the unit. The extension would have a flat roof and vertical walls to the front and rear. The facing materials on the front and rear of the extension would be largely clad in mineral board with aluminium windows of materials to match the existing building.

10. To the front the proposed roof level extension would not be easily visible from ground floor level when immediately facing the building. This is because the extension would be mostly concealed behind the existing front parapet wall. However, due to the highway configuration and location of other built forms in the area, the extension would be open to longer views. In particular, the front of the extension would be more prominent on Munster Road to the south of the appeal property. The proposed extension would also be visible from Chaldon Road to the rear, where the extension would sit flush with the existing rear wall of the building.
11. In these views, the proposed development would appear as a bulky and incongruous addition to the existing building. This is due to the combination of the location of the extension in proximity to the front and rear walls of the existing building and the vertical walls and scale of the extension itself. The incongruous appearance of the proposed development would be heightened as a result of its detailed design. The large areas of unbroken cladding would reinforce the bulk of the addition. The proposed windows to the front and rear do little to break the bulk of the addition, are of differing proportions that give the extension a muddled appearance, and are of a design that makes little attempt to reference the existing building.
12. The result is an extension that would not successfully integrate into the existing building in a way that maintains its contribution to the character of the wider area. Whilst it would not be widely visible, where open to views the extension would detract from the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area.
13. Evidence draws my attention to a number of roof extensions in the area that exhibit features that are similar to the proposed development. I have limited evidence before me relating to the circumstances that led to each of these features being present. It is inevitable that some examples of development similar to a proposal can be found in most areas. These built forms are acknowledged as forming part of the general street scene. However, in reaching a conclusion on this appeal I have focused on the merits of the proposed development and the effect that it would have on the host property and the area.
14. For the reasons discussed above, I find that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area. Consequently, I find conflict with policies in the Hammersmith and Fulham Local Plan and supporting supplementary guidance. In particular, detailed policy in DC4 of the Local Plan which includes design policy relating to alterations and extensions of existing buildings that aim to encourage a high standard of design. This policy includes the requirements that development should be compatible with the scale and character of existing development and the setting, successfully integrated into the existing building, and appropriate in terms of scale and materials.
15. My attention has been drawn to a number of policies concerning design, in particular those within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the London Plan. The policies referenced are mostly general in nature and aimed at achieving a suitable standard of design in new developments. For the reasons explained above, I conclude that the proposed development would not be of a quality that would meet the aspirations of these policies.

16. Evidence also makes reference to emerging policy on extensions in the new draft London Plan. As the proposed development would not achieve a suitable standard of design, and the draft London Plan does not seek to weaken the commitment to achieving good design, I do not find evidence in the Plan that causes me to reach a different conclusion on this appeal.

Internal living space

17. Policy HO4 of the Hammersmith and Fulham Local Plan requires new housing to be designed in accordance with London Plan internal space policies, unless it can be shown that not building to those standards is justified by the circumstances of a particular site. The internal space policies from the London Plan are replicated in the Hammersmith and Fulham Planning Guidance Supplementary Document. These policies are consistent with the internal floor areas set out in Table 1 of the Nationally Described Space Standard – Technical Housing Standard.
18. In relation to the proposed development, the main parties agree that the relevant internal space policy to be applied in this case is 61 square metres. However, there is disagreement over whether the specific dimensions of the proposed development meet the applicable policy. The discrepancy in calculations between the main parties is indicated to be in the region of 4 square metres.
19. Regardless of whether the proposed development meets the specific requirement, or falls just short, it is necessary to consider whether the unit as proposed would create satisfactory living conditions for future residents and whether the circumstances of the particular site justify the chosen layout.
20. It is noted that the proposed development would provide a main living area across the front of the property. Direct access to the small terrace that would serve as amenity space for the unit would be provided from the living area. A small kitchen would also be provided off the living area. A double and a single bedroom would be provided to the rear of the property off an entrance hall to the unit. A bathroom would separate the bedrooms and have its own access from the hallway that would also include a small storage cupboard.
21. The configuration described above is logical and makes good use of the space available to ensure there is appropriate subdivision of living and sleeping areas and rooms are suitably proportioned. Given the constraints of the site and position of the internal staircase, the overall floorspace of the unit could only be increased by reducing the size of the terrace. This would have a knock on effect on amenity space that would be undesirable.
22. In light of the above, I conclude that the proposed development would provide acceptable living conditions for future residents in terms of the provision of internal living space. If there is a shortfall in terms of meeting the internal space policy set out in HO4 and supplementary guidance then evidence indicates that this would be minimal, would not have a impact in terms of the quality of accommodation proposed, and would be justified by the circumstances of the specific site. Consequently, I find no conflict with policies in the Hammersmith and Fulham Local Plan, the London Plan, and supporting supplementary guidance.

Whether the proposed development is otherwise acceptable

23. In relation to the 2 issues that are of disagreement between the main parties I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area. In reaching this conclusion I have considered all the evidence before me, including the assessment of all the issues by the main parties. I have therefore considered the development as a whole. However, in light of the conclusion on the issues of disagreement, it is not necessary or desirable for me to set out a detailed assessment and conclude on other aspects of the proposed development that evidence suggests are not areas of disagreement.

Conclusion

24. For the above reasons, and taking account of other matters raised in the appeal, the appeal is dismissed and planning permission is refused for a roof extension to create a 2 bedroom flat.

D.R. McCreery

INSPECTOR