
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 January 2020

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

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/A5270/W/19/3240518
6-8 Evelyn Road, Chiswick, London W4 5JL

- 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 Esmond Reid against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Ealing.
 - The application Ref 191168FUL, dated 13 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is the infill of a 1m wide gap between the east flank wall of the host property at 6-8 Evelyn Road, London W4 5JL, and the new, opposing west flank wall of the recently built dwelling adjoining at 10 Evelyn Road.
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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 existing building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal properties are a 3 storey pair of white, rendered, semi-detached houses of traditional appearance. The properties are subdivided into flats, which includes residential units that span both properties, served by a main external entrance on the 6 Evelyn Road side.
4. The general character of the area is residential in nature, with most houses being of traditional appearance and varying between 2 and 3 storeys. There is some variation in building materials, mostly between frontages of various types of exposed brickwork and render. The general street layout is also traditional, with mostly terraced and larger semi-detached houses arranged on streets with gaps at the end that allow views down the rear of buildings on adjoining streets.
5. The proposed development would infill a small gap between the appeal property and the neighbouring 10 Evelyn Road at first and second floor levels. The extension would over sail an existing gated entrance that provides access to the rear of the properties and would remain. The result would be an extension that joins the side wall of the appeal properties to 10 Evelyn Road at first and second floor levels.

6. The appeal properties as a pair currently stand detached from neighbouring buildings. They can be distinguished visually from the neighbouring 10 Evelyn Road as this property rises to 2 storeys and has a front elevation faced in red brick, in contrast to the appeal properties 3 storeys and rendered front elevations. The physical separation between the appeal properties and their neighbours serves to reinforce these distinctions and ensure that they are viewed as separate buildings.
7. Given the variety of building styles in the local area, the proposed development cannot be regarded as an incongruous feature. Notwithstanding this, it would disrupt this physical separation between the properties and, in doing so, would blur the distinction between them. The result would be an extension that would detract from the appearance of the appeal properties' and have a harmful impact on the street scene.
8. Furthermore, whilst the gap between the properties is neither wide nor strategically important in itself, its presence is consistent with the general pattern of the street scene where gaps between buildings and groups of buildings and streets is an important part of the character and appearance of the area. Breaks between buildings are just as important as the built forms - offering visual relief, contrast with buildings, and allowing views beyond and contributing to visual interest of a street. The loss of the gap between buildings at first and second floor levels as a result of the proposed development would lead to the loss of these benefits and compromise the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
9. My attention is drawn to a number of built forms in the area that are thought to exhibit features that are similar to the proposed development. I do not have 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 they do not characterise the area. and 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.
10. It is also noted that there is a similar infill element at 10 Evelyn Road on the opposite end to the appeal properties. This element does not exhibit a high degree of architectural merit nor contribute greatly to the street scene. However, in contrast to the appeal proposal, it does have the advantage of being between 2 buildings of similar scale and appearance and, as a result, it blends into the street scene to a degree. The proposed development would infill buildings of different scale and appearance. It would not bring a desirable level of coherence or symmetry to the street scene, rather it would detract for the reasons discussed above.

11. For the reasons set out 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 Ealing Local Plan and the London Plan. In particular, policy 1.1 of the Ealing Development Strategy Development Plan Document, policies 7.4 and 7B of the Ealing Development Management Development Plan Document, and policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan. These policies, along with supplementary guidance, seek to encourage development that is designed to a high standard.

Other matters

12. Evidence indicates that the owner of 10 Evelyn Road has expressed a level of agreement to the proposed development taking place. I do not have any specific representations from the owner of 10 Evelyn Road to either confirm, nor dispute, this. Regardless, agreement to a development taking place does not in itself offer justification for it, which must be assessed on its own planning merits. As such, the agreement, or otherwise, of the owner of 10 Evelyn Road to the proposed development has not been given particular weight in reaching a conclusion on this appeal.
13. The evidence presented by the appellant asks whether, should the appeal be dismissed, I could suggest minor amendments to the proposed development to make it acceptable. Whether a future application for planning permission for development is likely to gain planning permission would be a matter for the Council to consider in the first instance. It would not be appropriate for me to make reference to potential changes that could prejudice any future discussions between the main parties.
14. It is noted that representations from other parties relating to this appeal raise other matters, including the impact on property values, how the space would be used, matters relating to the construction of the proposed development, and legal issues relating to the use of the appeal property under the terms of the lease. These matters have been considered but do not raise issues that are central to the consideration of this appeal.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons, and taking account of the other matters raised in the appeal, the appeal is dismissed.

D.R. McCreery

INSPECTOR