



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 January 2020

by Rory MacLeod BA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/3239096

106 Walton Road, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 0HP

- 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 John Faulkner against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/0527, dated 21 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is two-storey rear extension to create two houses incorporating roof terraces and second floor front extension to create one flat and increase in ridge height of 1.8m following demolition of existing rear outbuilding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The proposal's description is taken from the decision notice as this captures the extent of development more completely than that on the application form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed two storey rear extension on the character and appearance of the area and on heritage assets in respect of its size and siting.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal relates to a two storey building on a corner plot at the junction of Walton Road with Spencer Road comprising a shop with a flat above. The adjacent shopping parade along Walton Road is set in a three storey building. The Council raises no objection to the second floor addition to create an additional flat and I have no reason to disagree with this.
5. The two storey rear extension would replace outbuildings and a close boarded fence abutting the footway to Spencer Road and would also adjoin a rear access road leading to shop servicing yards and a small car park. There are commercial premises to both sides of Walton Road of mixed form and design. Beyond the rear access road Spencer Road is residential in character with two storey houses to both sides.

6. The two storey extension would be a prominent feature when viewed from the south along Spencer Road due to its forward siting in relation to the building line of houses to the south and the open nature of the corner with the rear access road. The south facing end elevation would have a relatively bland appearance with one small window set in an otherwise featureless wall. Whilst the proposal would in part screen the rectangular blocks to the adjacent service yard, it would be a prominent feature in the street scene due to its siting closer to Spencer Road.
7. By contrast, the front facing eastern elevation would present aligned windows and matching entrance doors to the two houses. But the extension would have a relatively cramped appearance abutting the public footway about 2m in width for a length of some 11m. A lamppost at the back edge of the footway would almost touch the building resulting in a curious and uncharacteristic feature. The fence currently at the back edge of the footway is modest in stature compared with the proposed high replacement wall. The stepping forward of the fence in relation to the present flank wall of the building may be a pre-existing feature but does not justify bringing the two storey massing of the extension to this line. Railings to the flat roof around roof gardens would have a lesser mass than a conventional pitched roof but would result in a box like appearance to the development untypical for the locality.
8. The flank wall of the existing building at the road junction is set back from Spencer Road. The forward siting of the extension would thereby also be conspicuous when viewed from the crossroad of Walton Road with Spencer Road and Manor Road opposite. The siting would contrast with that of outlying structures to the rear of 104 Walton Road on the opposite side of the junction with Spencer Road which are set back sufficiently from the footway to enable on site parking. The public house on the north-eastern corner of Walton Road with Manor Road has an attractive flank elevation behind a footway of generous width. But the building on the north-western corner with Manor Road has three storeys abutting a relatively narrow footway. Most of its ground floor flank wall relates to the commercial use whereas at the appeal site the ground floor flank wall abutting the footway would contain the only windows to the main habitable room within both proposed dwellings. The proposal would not follow a pattern set by other corner plots.
9. The appellant has referred to a site on the corner of Walton Road with Matham Road where two and three storey buildings have been constructed along the Matham Road return frontage. Whilst the initial return frontage here has ground floor windows abutting the footway, the three storey dwellings beyond are set back with railings and small hedges providing some defensible space between ground floor windows and the footway. The junction has a less open character than that with Spencer Road and does not set a precedent for the appeal proposal.
10. My findings are that the forward siting, massing and design of the two storey extension would be out of keeping with the character of development in the surrounding area and would detract from the appearance of the street scene in Spencer Road. The proposal would conflict with Policies CS7 and CS17 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011) (ECS) and with Policy DM2 of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan (2015) (DMP). These collectively require new development to deliver high quality design, responding to the positive features of individual locations and to enhance the public realm and street scene.

11. Policy DM2 cross references The Elmbridge Design and Character Supplementary Planning Document (2012) and its Companion Guide which aims to ensure that the design of future development is more locally responsive, sustainable and built to a high quality. Whilst this refers to some buildings being set to the back edge of the pavement, in this instance it would not be following a well-defined building line. There would be conflict with the SPD in relation to local character. There would also be conflict with Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which requires planning decisions to ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of an area and are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment.

Heritage assets

12. The site is not within a conservation area. It is located about 50m from the nearest conservation area to the north. The rear extension would scarcely be visible from within the conservation area being screened by other buildings. It would not adversely affect the character or appearance of the conservation area. There is a Grade II listed building opposite the appeal site at 104 Walton Road designated due to its strong decorative treatment, particularly the shopfront with distinctive mosaic signage. There would be sufficient separation from the proposal for it not to compete with the appearance of this prominent corner property; nor would it detract from its setting as a listed building. There would be greater separation to the locally listed public house on the corner with Manor Road; the proposal would not detract from the appearance of this building.
13. Whilst I have concluded that there would be harm to the character and appearance of the area, the proposal would not result in harm to any designated heritage asset. There would not be conflict with Policy DM12 of the DMP which requires proposals to protect, conserve and enhance the Borough's historic environment.

Other matters

14. The proposal would result in the benefit of three additional housing units in a sustainable location close to everyday services and public transport. These would all have two bedrooms and would be compatible with the smaller size of units considered to be most needed in Elmbridge.
15. The Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites with the appropriate buffer. The Council's housing policies can be considered out of date and the presumption in favour of sustainable development and of granting planning permission at Paragraph 11 of the Framework therefore applies. However, the benefit of three additional dwellings need to be weighed against the harm arising to the character and appearance of the area. It is my judgement that the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
16. I acknowledge the appellant's frustration at delays in the processing of the appeal application and that there have been a series of refusal of planning permissions for development at this site. I have not been provided with full details of previous proposals but have considered the current proposal on its individual merits having regard to current local and national planning policies.

Conclusion

17. The size and siting of the proposed two storey rear extension would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. For the reasons given and having regard to all other matters raised the appeal is dismissed.

Rory MacLeod

INSPECTOR