



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 February 2020

by M Seaton DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28 May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/19/3241729

55-57 High Street, Wanstead, London, E11 2AE

- 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 Arsalan Khalique (on behalf of Uptime Properties Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 1031/19, dated 10 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is height alterations to rear roof profile from flat to pitched roof. Loft conversion to create one 2 x Bedroom flat with the provision of an external terrace, cycle/refuse/recycling storage facilities. Three front & four rear roof lights. Replace all upper storey single glazed windows to double glazed.
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Procedural Matter

1. I have been mindful in my decision-making that whilst the main parties have referred me to The London Plan – The Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations since 2011, March 2016 (the London Plan), the *Draft London Plan – Consolidated Suggested Changes Version, July 2019* has subsequently been published along with further updates including details of the 'intention to publish' version of the draft London Plan of December 2019. Nevertheless, neither the Council nor the appellant has relied upon the emerging policies in their submissions, and the emerging London Plan does not yet form part of the Development Plan.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building, and whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wanstead Village Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is occupied by 3-storey property which accommodates a café and restaurant on the ground and first floors, with private residential units on the second floor. The site is set at the junction between High Street and Grosvenor Road and is located within the primary shopping area within Wanstead District Centre. At the junction between Grosvenor Road and

Nightingale Lane close to the appeal site is Wanstead United Reform Church (URC), a Grade II listed building.

5. The appeal site lies within the Wanstead Village Conservation Area. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) places a duty upon the decision-maker, in the exercise of planning functions, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. This is also reflected in the approach set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
6. The Wanstead Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2006 (the CA Appraisal) highlights the appeal site to be located within *Character Zone D: High Street, Wanstead Town Centre*. This area is the commercial hub of Wanstead Village, where building plots are characteristically narrow and buildings are generally no more than 3 storeys in height. The building types and architecture of the Conservation Area are highlighted as being quite varied. The URC is also identified as being a landmark at the approach to Nightingale Lane and Grosvenor Road.
7. The appeal proposal would see a further extension to the rear of the property atop an existing area of flat roof. The proposed roof extension would result in the removal of an existing parapet wall extending above eaves level and replacement with a red clay tile sloping roof. Other alterations would include the provision of an external terrace associated with the new roof storey accommodation, rooflights and new windows.
8. The Council has raised a number of concerns over the impact of the proposal. As existing I consider that the flat roof has a relatively modest visual impact with the eye naturally drawn to the sloping roof form of the front and corner elevations of the property along with the articulated turret. Furthermore, whilst not specifically identified in the CA Appraisal, I accept the Council's contention that the appeal property as existing is an attractive building that makes a positive visual contribution within the Conservation Area. In particular, I observed its role in framing the setting of the URC when viewed from High Street, although I recognise that the location of the proposed extensions would not be readily visible from High Street.
9. I acknowledge that the design incorporates a degree of subservience being in part both setback from the Grosvenor Road frontage and down from the ridge height of the existing main roof, and that there would be a consistent eaves datum along the full Grosvenor Road elevation along with the use of high quality materials. I also note that whilst there are some other examples of a 'mansard-style' design approach within the area, it is far from a prevalent roof form. However, it is undeniably the case that the proposal would introduce significant additional bulk to the roof storey as a consequence of the replacement of the flat roof in what is a prominent location.
10. I accept that the existing views of the URC from High Street would be generally unaffected by the proposed development due to the angle of the proposed extension in relation to the existing roof form. Nevertheless, there would be an adverse visual impact within the existing street scene along Grosvenor Road despite the presence of an existing mature tree on the adjoining land to the

east, and particularly when viewed from Nightingale Lane and the area to the front of the URC within the Conservation Area. I appreciate the roof geometry and height are essentially governed by the need to achieve the necessary floor to ceiling heights and to facilitate the quantum of desired additional accommodation, but this results in a somewhat contrived roof form as a consequence. However, even accepting that the area exhibits a reasonable variety of design, as recognised in the CA Appraisal, the bulk and massing of the proposed roof extension would appear as an obtrusive and overwhelming addition to the rear of the property.

11. I do not dispute the appellant's contention that the resultant removal of the existing chimney tower, the collection of TV aerials and the external access ladder would represent a visual improvement, but do not regard the benefit as sufficient to outweigh the harm identified. Furthermore, on the basis of my observations, I do not agree with the appellant that the existing flat roof should be regarded as having any less than a neutral effect on the Conservation Area, and do not therefore attach any weight in support of the proposed development or the specific need for its replacement.
12. I note that the Council has indicated that the proposed rooflights and alterations to upper storey fenestration are acceptable, and I do not disagree with these conclusions.
13. The Framework makes a distinction between a development causing substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset and works that would lead to less than substantial harm. Paragraph 196 of the Framework continues by stating that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
14. In this case, I find that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm for the reasons described. In respect of public benefits, I accept that the provision of an additional dwelling would make a very limited contribution towards the housing supply and need of the area, and that there would also be some economic and social benefits related to the development, and the future occupation of the dwellings. I also acknowledge that the re-roofing and maintenance of the existing building, whilst clearly a benefit, would not be a clear public benefit. In any event, there is no evidence before me from which to conclude there is an intrinsic link demonstrating the dependency of these works on the undertaking of the proposed development. Therefore, I am not persuaded overall that these matters represent any more than a limited public benefit which would be insufficient to outweigh the otherwise identified harm.
15. For these reasons, I have found that the proposal would result in an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the host building and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, and in accordance with Section 72 of The Act, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. There would be conflict with policies LP26 and LP33 of the Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030 (adopted March 2018) and Policy 7.4 of The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London consolidated with Alterations since 2011 (March 2016). These policies promote high quality design in all development within the borough that respects local character and makes a positive architectural and urban design contribution to its context, has regard to and respect for the surrounding area, in terms of layout, form, style,

massing, scale, density, orientation, materials, and design, whilst allowing existing buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of a place to influence the future character of the area, and preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the historic environment. In addition, given the great importance of the heritage asset, the scheme would conserve the heritage asset in a manner appropriate to its significance, and would not conflict with the Framework.

Other Matters

16. I recognise that the appellant sought detailed pre-application comments from the Council and further to the refusal of planning permission feel somewhat aggrieved that they believed they had followed the suggestions made by the Council in presenting the proposed development at the planning application stage in the current form. However, for the reasons I have already set out, I do not consider that the revised scheme has responded sufficiently to its context to ensure that it does not result in harm to either the host building or Conservation Area.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons as set out, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Seaton

INSPECTOR