



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 August 2020

by Paul Jackson B Arch (Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V5570/D/20/3244939

21 Barnsbury Square, Islington, London N1 1JP

- 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 Mark Dixon and Emyr Fairburn against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Islington.
 - The application Ref P2019/2911/FUL, dated 27 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 22 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is excavation to form basement with lightwells; insertion of bi-fold doors with juliet balcony at 1st floor level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed bifold doors and Juliet balcony at first floor level would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Barnsbury Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property comprises a post-war end of terrace 2 storey dwelling of modest proportions. The terrace is distinctly subordinate to surrounding development by reason of its orientation, materials, architectural and detail design. Nearby late Georgian and early Victorian villas facing the square are substantially greater in scale with 4 storeys including a semi-basement. Buildings around the square are mixed in terms of character with some contemporary replacement buildings and extensions, but these also respect and contribute to the character and appearance of the square in terms of size, window proportions and orientation. Listed buildings at 27-28 Barnsbury Square and 2-6 Mountfort Crescent contribute strongly to the character and appearance of the area.
4. The proposed first floor window would be about 3 metres wide, similar to an existing ground floor opening. It would face the square centrally in the flank elevation. In contrast to the ground floor window which is partly hidden by vegetation, the first floor opening would be a prominent feature seen by the public from the square and from parts of the Barnsbury Square Garden. It would be particularly obvious seen on turning the north western corner of the square, a view in which listed buildings contribute a great deal to the perception of heritage significance.

5. The proposed opening and balcony railings would significantly increase the prominence of the appeal property in the composition of buildings around the square. The introduction of fully opening bi-fold glazed doors of the size proposed would be disproportionate and out of keeping with the modest scale of the house, in architectural terms. The new opening would distract attention from the considered proportions of the listed buildings and there would be a conspicuous contrast with the more restrained design of the great majority of nearby dwellings.
6. The need for additional natural light does not weigh heavily in favour of the proposal because this could be achieved by other means. The existing blank gable end is innocuous and neither contributes nor detracts from appreciation of this part of the conservation area. Whilst a degree of incongruity might not be unacceptable in many places with heritage significance, the actual effect and amount of harm depends on the specific location and detail design. In this case, the size and appearance of the proposed opening would be a step too far. In considering this I have taken into account nearby developments referred to by the appellant including the high level patent glazing at No. 29, but this is set back, non-opening and subordinate to the adjacent property.
7. The general aim of the development plan including the London Plan of 2016 and Islington's Development Plan as set out in the Core Strategy of 2011 (CS) and the Development Management Policies of 2013 (DMP) is to conserve the Borough's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. In particular, policy DM2.1 requires development to be of high quality, making a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of an area, based upon an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. It advises that permission will be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention is given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas.
8. In the terms used in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) there would be a moderate degree of 'less than substantial' harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area. No public benefits would arise to balance against this harm. For all the above reasons, the proposed new first floor opening, bi-fold doors and juliet balcony would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Barnsbury Conservation Area and would conflict with the relevant aims of London Plan policies, CS policy CS9, DMP policies DM2.1 and 2.3, supplementary guidance and the advice in the NPPF. The appeal should not succeed.

Paul Jackson

INSPECTOR