
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 October 2020

by R E Jones BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th November 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/20/3257057
17 Norley Vale, London SW15 4BS

- 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 Alan Aros against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2019/4803, dated 25 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as: balcony enclosure by installing set of window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue effect of the proposed window on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area, including the Alton Estate Conservation Area (AECA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a first floor flat within a three-storey maisonette located on the Alton Estate. It is proposed to enclose the existing recessed balcony on the rear elevation with a uPVC window.
4. The site falls within the substantial AECA. I have therefore attached considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance in accordance with the Act¹.
5. The exterior of the appeal building is characterised by an unbroken rhythm of identical features such as windows, chimney stacks, balconies and external brickwork and displays very little sign of change or alteration. This strong uniformity and orderly arrangement of architectural details gives the appeal building a distinctive appearance when viewed from surrounding roads and communal landscaped areas. In the wider context, the AECA's special character, is in part, derived from the range of building scales, that include tower blocks and short terraces, and the overall consistency of the architectural features relating to each housing type. The appeal building is considered to

¹ Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

form part of this special character and makes a positive contribution in this respect.

6. The installation of the proposed window would enclose the large open space created by the existing recessed balcony and result in the loss of an original architectural feature of the appeal building. The first-floor position of the proposed window would result in the change to the elevation appearing prominent when viewed from Norley Vale and Alton Road. This would have a disruptive effect on the sequence and balanced arrangement of balconies on the rear façade of the appeal building. Although the proposed change would be relatively minor, the enclosing of the large open space created by the balcony would appear blunt and incongruous when seen in context with the orderly and consistent arrangement of the other original architectural details that contribute towards the appeal building's character. The proposal would therefore harm the character and appearance of the host building.
7. My attention has been drawn to the Alton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy. This states that the charm of the Alton estate lies in the fact that most buildings still have original details (Paragraph 5.16), while buildings and townscape features that make a positive contribution to the character of the area should be preserved as far as possible in order to maintain the special character of the conservation area (Paragraph 7.3).
8. The carefully arranged architectural detailing and external features that give the appeal building its uniform appearance have a positive effect on the conservation area. The proposed window and resultant loss of the open balcony area would harm the existing rhythm of the rear façade when viewed from publicly accessible areas and would have a negative presence within the existing setting of the AECA, that would fail to preserve its character.
9. In the context of the wider AECA, the proposal would comprise a relatively modest change, while it would not add to the scale of the appeal building. Nevertheless, small changes to the buildings within the AECA, which are notable for the uniformity and display very little sign of alteration to original features, can have a noticeable and harmful effect, and the proposal would exemplify this for the reasons given.
10. The appellant considers that there is no consistency in this part of the conservation area, as blocks of flats and terraced dwellings all differ in their design, size and appearance. I acknowledge that there are different housing types within the immediate locale, yet each displays visual consistency in terms of detailing and external features, and in this regard the appeal proposal would harm those special qualities.
11. The harm I have identified in relation to the proposed window is less than substantial in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 196). Accordingly, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. However, the proposed development would not add to the supply of housing in the area and although it may make a small contribution to the local economy in terms of the installation work, there are no public benefits that would outweigh the harm.
12. Therefore, I conclude that the proposed window would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area, including the Alton Estate Conservation Area. The scheme conflicts with

Policies DM1, DM2 and DM5 of the Local Plan², the Housing Supplementary Planning Document (adopted 2016) and Policy 7.8 (D) of the London Plan (2016). These policies, amongst other considerations, require proposals to conserve and enhance the special historic and architectural character of conservation areas and avoid visual harm, while also being sympathetic to the architectural detail of heritage assets. The proposal would also be contrary to the Framework which requires heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out, the appeal should be dismissed.

R. E. Jones

INSPECTOR

² Wandsworth Local Plan, Development Management Policies Document, adopted March 2016