

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: 12th November 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/20/3256313

250 Bank House, Wimbledon Park Road, London SW19 6NL

- 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 250 WPD Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2019/4780, dated 4 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is construction of a two storey plus mansard extension above the existing single storey flat-roofed extension to provide 3 no. new flats. Change of use to the existing first floor staff room from the A2 commercial unit, to form new first floor flat. Existing access from staff room to ground floor commercial unit to be removed.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by 250 WPD Ltd against the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matter

3. The Council's reasons for refusal referred to the absence of an arboriculture assessment to demonstrate the proposal's effect on trees. However, they have now had sight of this assessment and accept that the tree protection measures are acceptable. Consequently, I consider that this matter has been addressed.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and area, including the significance of the Sutherland Grove Conservation Area; and
 - The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of existing neighbouring occupiers of the adjoining flats at No 254 Wimbledon Park Road, with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site comprises a large corner building on the junction of Wimbledon Park Road and Augustus Road and located in the centre of Southfield, close to shops, commercial uses and residential dwellings. It has a distinctive roof formation that, in part, curves to follow the corner of the street, while the unbroken roof eaves and attractive rhythm of contrasting external finishes at each storey have a unifying effect on the building. Dormer windows and twin gables project from the roof's plane, while a number of chimney stacks rise above the ridgeline. The appeal building's Augustus Road frontage has a lower ridgeline that steps down from the taller portion of the roof that faces Wimbledon Park Road. It also has a more domestic scale and appearance characterised by the twin roof gables and lower ridgeline that results in the appeal building having a sympathetic presence when seen in context with the traditional semi-detached dwellings that line Augustus Road.
6. Despite the contrast in height between the two frontages, the appeal building nevertheless has a coherent appearance in terms of its design, architectural detailing and use of materials that has a positive presence at this location.
7. In the context of the immediate area, the appeal building, along with Southfield Station, and the properties on the corner of Wimbledon Park Road and Replingham Road, form a group of distinctive historical buildings that face the busy crossroads, adding visual interest to the built form in this area.
8. The proposed development would rise between 0.85 metres and 1.1 metres above the ridgeline of the appeal dwelling's Augustus Road façade, while its 2nd floor level and mansard roof would add bulk to the appeal building that would contrast markedly in scale, form and detailing to the existing roof plane it would adjoin. This would result in the proposal appearing blunt and hostile rising above the ridgeline and projecting outwards from the existing roof plane of the appeal building. Consequently, the design, bulk and height of the proposal's front elevation would have a poor visual relationship with the host building, displaying very little architectural continuity or balance in relation to it.
9. There are some unsympathetic modern features on the appeal building such as the ATM machine and the plant equipment to the rear, yet these do not fundamentally alter or harm its appearance to the extent the proposal would. Moreover, their presence does not justify allowing the development for the reasons already outlined. Therefore, this argument attracts little weight.
10. When viewed from areas around the crossroads, there would be an obvious tension between the proposed development and the rest of the appeal building, while its appearance and identity as part of a small group of distinctive historic buildings close to the roundabout would be adversely diminished by the unsympathetic form and bulk of the proposed development. Furthermore, the interface between the Augustus Road elevation of the appeal building and the residential houses to the south west would be unacceptably blunted by the proposal's top-heavy roof formation.
11. The appellant has drawn attention to Nos 258-260 Wimbledon Park Road (Nos 258-260), a tall building capped with a mansard roof and located a short

distance away from the appeal building on its Wimbledon Park Road frontage. While there would be similarities with the appeal proposal in terms of the roof formation, it is separated from the appeal building by Nos 254-256, which, with its lower height and roof parapet provides relief to the appeal building from the taller No 258-260. In contrast the proposed development, would adjoin the appeal building and have an abrupt and more imposing effect on its existing roof formation to the detriment of its appearance, and as such would not provide balance to the street corner in the way the appellant describes.

12. There is an extant consent for an extension at the appeal building, albeit unimplemented, to enlarge the Augustus Road frontage. From the limited details provided on that case, it would have a different roof formation, be lower in height and have a more reduced mass compared to the appeal proposal. Therefore, in the absence of any significant similarities with the appeal development, this matter attracts little weight.
13. The appeal site is located adjacent, but outside of the Southerland Grove Conservation Area (SGCA). An appraisal statement for the SGCA has not been presented with the appeal, nonetheless from my site visit I observed that its significant features were the uniform arrangement of semi-detached dwellings set back from the road, low boundary walls and attractively landscaped front gardens. The appeal property faces the southern boundary of the SGCA and is separated from the residential properties to the north by the highway. Although the appeal building's Augustus Road frontage has some domestic detailing in its facade, it is positioned close to the road rather than set back from it, and has no front garden and boundary enclosure, unlike many of those within the SGCA. The appeal site contributes very little to the setting of the SGCA and consequently its significance.
14. Given the context and the location of the proposal, it would not harm the setting of the SGCA and those special qualities which contribute towards its significance.
15. A number of examples have been referred to relating to large modern buildings with visible roof additions and located close to or within the SGCA. However, as I have found no harm in respect of the proposal's effect on the significance of the SGCA, these examples have not been considered further.
16. The Council's assessment of the proposal refers to the host building as an undesignated heritage asset, however, according to the appellant it does not appear on a local list. Even if the appellant is correct, this does not alter my concerns in respect of the proposal's harm to the building and the area.
17. Although I have found that the proposal does not harm the significance of the SGCA, it would nevertheless have an unacceptable adverse effect on the character and appearance of the host building and the area, and fail to accord with Policy DMS 1 of the Wandsworth Local Plan – Development Management Policies Document, adopted March 2016 (Local Plan). This requires development proposals to optimise the layout and arrangement of buildings to ensure a high level of physical integration with their surroundings, and ensure that the scale, massing and appearance contributes positively to local character.
18. The Council's refusal reason on this matter indicated that the proposed development did not accord with Policy DMH 5 of the Local Plan. Whilst the

proposal would breach the broad content of the policy, it is nevertheless more applicable to residential extensions, and as this is a commercial property, it has not been referred to in my conclusions.

Living Conditions

19. Existing first and second floor windows relating to No 254 Wimbledon Park Road (No 254) have an outlook predominantly facing west towards the residential properties along Augustus Road. Yet this is somewhat constrained by the close proximity of the existing built development which can be observed from within the rooms those windows serve. This would include the existing roof and part of the rear elevation of the appeal building. The proposal would increase the height and mass of the appeal building's roof, yet this would not block views from within those neighbouring habitable rooms, nor would it excessively enclose the space around them to any significant extent beyond the current situation. Accordingly, the proposal would not adversely harm the outlook of occupiers of No 254.
20. The appellant has amended the scheme to remove an external terrace area, while proposing to obscure glaze specific windows. These changes would ensure that harmful overlooking from the proposal towards neighbouring windows is removed.
21. The proposal would have an acceptable effect on the living conditions of existing neighbouring occupiers of the adjoining flats at No 254 Wimbledon Park Road, with particular regard to outlook. It would comply with Policy DMS 1 of the Local Plan where it requires proposals not to harm the amenity of nearby properties through unsatisfactory outlook.

Other Matters

22. The proposal would utilise existing vacant space above a building, increase the provision and mix of housing in the Borough, while being located in a very accessible location with good public transport connections and access to shops and services. Given that the number of housing units proposed is small, I consider that these matters attract moderate weight. The adverse harm in respect of the proposal's effect on the building and surrounding area would be significant, while also failing to accord with the development plan. Accordingly, the benefits outlined do not outweigh the harm in this respect.

Conclusion

23. Although the proposed dwelling would not have a harmful impact on the living conditions of nearby occupiers and the significance of the SGCA, this lack of harm would have a neutral effect. Consequently, it would not overcome the proposal's harm upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area, and the resultant conflict with the development plan.
24. For the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed.

R. E. Jones

INSPECTOR