

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2020

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 November 2020

Appeal Reference: APP/K3605/D/20/3251416

Land at 2 Candle Mews, Walton Road, East Molesey KT8 0GZ

- 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 N Walsh against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application (reference 2020/0523, dated 10 February 2020) was refused by notice dated 22 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a "*loft conversion with a front and rear dormer to provide two additional rooms*".
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in the local centre of East Molesey, in an area of mixed development. Walton Road itself (the B369) is a busy through route, with a range of commercial premises along the frontages in the vicinity of the appeal site. Indeed, Candle Mews serves the rear of a parade of shops and other commercial units that face the main road and follow a bend in the frontage. The parade has two storeys of flats above the commercial premises, which are reached from stairs at the rear of the building.
4. The local centre itself is attractive and the parade of shops is an imposing three storey building, of some architectural quality, under a long tiled roof, set back behind a wide pavement. Trees planted in the paved area in front of the building enhance the appearance of the surroundings.
5. By contrast, the rear elevation of the building, in Candle Mews, is rather unattractive. It was evidently less valued when it was originally designed and various additions have not improved it. Candle Mews itself acts as a service access and also provides space for bins and other paraphernalia that create a somewhat cluttered appearance.

6. Number 2 Candle Mews is one of a more modern terrace of modest houses that stands behind the larger frontage building and faces its rear elevation. In spite of the poor quality of the rear elevation of the shops and flats, this newer terrace has been constructed in a traditional style and it demonstrates an attention to architectural quality in the overall design and the brickwork details, making it attractive in itself and enhancing the surroundings.
7. It is now proposed that the existing terraced house at number 2 Candle Mews should be altered and extended by carrying out a "loft conversion" that would alter the shape of the existing roof and provide additional living space.
8. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (which was revised in February 2019) emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, which includes protecting existing amenities as well as providing good standards of accommodation.
9. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan, notably at Policy DM2 of the 'Elmbridge Local Plan Development Management Plan' (dated April 2015), which includes the aim of preserving or enhancing the surroundings. Similarly, Policy CS17 of the 'Elmbridge Core Strategy' (dated July 2011) is intended to promote well designed development, while making good use of urban land.
10. The Council's 'Design and Character Supplementary Planning Document', (dating from 2012) is also relevant, though it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan.
11. In this case, it is proposed that the existing ridge line should be maintained but that large "box" dormers should be added to the front and rear roof slopes of the house, almost to the height of the existing ridge. The existing house has three bedrooms on the first floor (one of which is very small) and a loft space above. The project which is the subject of this appeal would involve remodelling the first floor to provide two bedrooms and a small study (as well as better storage facilities) while adding a new bedroom, study and utility room on the new second floor.
12. The new dormers would, however, be obviously out of scale and out of keeping with the existing building. The flat roofed, box-shaped appearance would clash markedly with the form of the remaining terrace and would seriously detract from its appearance. Although the rear of the terrace is not prominent in the townscape, the visual appearance of Candle Mews itself would be so significantly damaged by the new dormer on the front of the roof that it ought not to be permitted.
13. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed development would make a useful addition to the existing house. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the architectural qualities of the existing house and to the streetscene in Candle Mews clearly outweigh the benefits of the proposed loft conversion.

14. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR