The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 November 2020

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/20/3256471
58A and 58B Bellefields Road, London SW9 9UQ

- 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 Ms Kovacs and Ms Griffith against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
- The application Ref 20/00157/FUL, dated 16 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2020.
- The development proposed is the enlargement of an existing rear extension at lower ground and ground floor level with associated landscaping works.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the planning application was determined, the Council has granted planning permission for the proposed lower ground floor extension and landscaping work[1], and therefore the greater part of the appeal proposal in fact already has planning permission. The only substantial part of the appeal proposal which does not form part of this existing permission is the enlargement of the bedroom in the upper ground floor flat. I have therefore limited my detailed consideration to the proposed upper ground floor extension which does not already have planning permission.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed upper ground floor extension on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a three-storey terraced house, with a three-storey outrigger at the rear, in an established primarily residential area close to Brixton town centre. It has been divided into three flats, 58A on the lower ground floor, 58B on the ground floor, and 58C on the first floor. The site is set on a reasonably generous (if slightly irregularly shaped) plot, which provides a decent sized rear garden serving the lower ground floor flat.

5. The proposal is to build a lower ground floor extension across the full width of the property, which with internal reconfiguration would provide new kitchen,

[1] Lambeth ref: 20/01431/FUL

dining and living space and allow for the provision of a second bedroom within 58A. The bedroom within 58B would be expanded by widening part of the rear outrigger at ground floor level. As a consequence of this, the rear window serving the kitchen 58B would be narrowed to around half its existing width.

6. I saw on my site visit that there is a considerable sense of openness and spaciousness in the rear garden of the appeal site and its neighbours, arising in part from the fence or brick wall boundaries which are not so high as to constrain views between gardens and the surrounding dwellings. As a consequence, the proposed development would be visible from several neighbouring rear gardens, as well as from the rear of some dwellings on Gateley Road to the north. Many of the surrounding properties have been altered and extended, although in general the traditional pattern of space between outriggers or closet wings has been preserved, especially above the lowest level (which may be ground or lower ground level according to the configuration of individual buildings).

7. Although the ground floor extension would be modest in size, the flat-roofed addition proposed for the inner side of the outrigger would be box-like and incongruous in appearance. While I saw some examples nearby where window openings appeared to have been created or resized, these were limited in number, and I have not been made aware of any cases where a window has been narrowed in the manner proposed for the kitchen at No 58B. The narrowed opening would appear out of place in the rear of the terrace as a whole, and in my view could not be made to fit in by the use of a traditionally-styled two pane window. Taken together, I consider that the ground floor extension and subsequent narrowing of the kitchen window would be an unusual and discordant feature. The proposed development would not respond well to the original building at ground floor level, and would disrupt the rhythm of built form and fenestration at the rear of the terrace.

8. The materials would match the existing building, and the extension would not be dominant because of its size. In these aspects of its character and appearance the proposal would therefore be acceptable. I also acknowledge that the appellants have taken care to design a scheme within the constraints of the site which does not have an adverse effect on living conditions for neighbouring occupiers. For the reasons set out above I have not considered the proposed lower ground floor extension or the associated landscaping works in detail. However, I note the Council did not find that they would have any unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the area, and neither the evidence before me or what I saw at the time of my site visit lead me to a different view. Nevertheless, a lack of harm in these respects would not outweigh the other harm I have found, and taken as a whole I consider that the proposed upper ground floor extension would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

9. I therefore conclude that the proposal conflicts with Policies Q5 and Q11 of the 2015 Lambeth Local Plan (the LLP), which among other things seek to ensure that development sustains and reinforces local distinctiveness, and that extensions respond to and retain original detailing including fenestration. Insofar as it relates to the impact of the external appearance of the proposed extension on visual amenity from adjoining sites, I also find limited conflict with LLP Policy Q2, although this policy is primarily concerned with the effect of

proposed developments on living conditions and, as described above, I find no conflict in these regards.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector