The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2021

by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/N1920/D/20/3263787
Primrose Cottage, Common Lane, Letchmore Heath, Watford WD25 8EE

- 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 Shaun Wilson against the decision of Hertsmere Borough Council.
- The application Ref 20/1093/HSE, dated 21 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 September 2020.
- The development proposed is replacement of window sashes.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for replacement of window sashes at Primrose Cottage, Common Lane, Letchmore Heath, Watford WD25 8EE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/1093/HSE, dated 21 July 2020, subject to the following conditions:

   1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.

   2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: DPL.01, DPL.02, DPL.03, Existing 1 revision C, Proposed 1 revision C, Existing 2 revision C, Proposed 2 revision C, Existing 3 revision C, Proposed 3 revision C.

Background and Main Issues

2. The Place Services consultee considers that the appeal property is a non-designated heritage asset. However, there is no indication that the Council or any other plan-making body has identified it as such. In the absence of any clear evidence to suggest otherwise, for the purposes of determining this appeal I do not consider that the appeal property is a non-designated heritage asset.

3. The main issue is therefore whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Letchmore Heath Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The property lies within the Letchmore Heath Conservation Area (the CA). I find that the significance of the CA derives from the mix of properties within it, which largely comprises individual houses with short terraces and pairs of semi-detached houses. Where alterations and extensions to these properties

are visible from the public highway these are generally sympathetic to the character and appearance of the host properties and of the wider CA. In accordance with the statutory duty set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.

5. Properties within the CA are covered by an Article 4 direction restricting alterations to the front elevations. The Council consider that the proposed replacement of the window sashes to the side and rear of the property would be acceptable. I see no reason to disagree with this as the front elevation is the principal elevation of the house facing the highway, and the only elevation covered by the Article 4 direction.

6. The new windows would be similar in appearance to the existing, and those in the neighbouring Wayside Cottage with which it forms a pair of semi-detached houses. While the windows would be double glazed and the outer panes would sit marginally further forward in their frames, the panes would be accommodated within frames of the same thickness and profile as the existing. The windows would be set within reveals of the same depth as with the existing windows. The replacement window sashes would therefore be of such similar appearance to the existing that they would have a neutral effect on the appearance of the property and the wider CA.

7. The appeal property is part of a semi-detached pair, and both houses retain their original front windows. The replacement of the window sashes would result in harm to the character of the house and the wider CA due to the loss of original fabric, which would be in contrast with that of Wayside Cottage.

8. In this case the harm would be limited to the replacement of the original single-glazed window sashes with double-glazed sashes. This harm would be experienced only in the immediate vicinity of the house, and the effect would be largely mitigated by the similarity in appearance of the replacement sashes. It would therefore amount to less than substantial harm, and at the lower end of the scale.

9. The National Planning Policy Framework states where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case these would amount to the replacement of single-glazed windows of deteriorating quality with new double-glazed windows. This would improve the energy efficiency of the property and help secure its long-term future. In this instance these benefits would outweigh the limited degree of harm to the significance of the CA that would result from the appeal proposal.

10. The appeal proposal would therefore preserve the appearance but result in harm to the character of the CA. it therefore conflicts with the Act and with Policies SADM29 and SADM30 of the Hertsmere Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and Policies CS14 and CS22 of the Hertsmere Core Strategy 2013. These policies collectively require that development conserve or enhance the historic environment of the Borough. However, the public benefits of the development would, in this instance, outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA. There are therefore material considerations that lead me to find other than in accordance with the development plan.

Conditions

11. I have imposed standard conditions specifying the time limit for commencement of the approved works and confirming the approved plans. As materials are specified on the approved plans, a separate condition is not necessary to control this.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above, the appeal succeeds.

M Chalk

INSPECTOR