

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 March 2021

by Mr C J Tivey BSc (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 March 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/20/3260481

First Floor Flat, 245 Sandycombe Road, Richmond TW9 2EW

- 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 Caroline Gardner-Green against the decision of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council.
 - The application Ref. 20/2029/HOT, dated 22 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is for a roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the appeal proposal upon the character and appearance of the host building, a Building of Townscape Merit, and the wider area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a two storey end of terrace building with commercial premises on the ground floor and a residential flat over. It is visually prominent from a number of locations, from Sandycombe Road, North Road to the east on the opposite side of the intervening railway line, and from the footbridge thereover.
4. Whilst I note that changes to fenestration at both ground and first floor level have been made in recent times, the overall form of the building with original butterfly roof concealed behind a parapet to its western (front) and northern (flank) elevations is largely intact, with only a pair of chimneys projecting from and above the latter. Consequently I consider that the appeal building remains a good example of London Victorian architecture and is worthy of its local listing, being a Building of Townscape Merit (BoTM), irrespective of whether that list is up to date. Therefore I consider the building at 245 Sandycombe Road to be a non-designated heritage asset pursuant to paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework').

5. There has been a change of policy at both National and Local level in the five years that have passed since the previous appeal decision¹ was made, nonetheless that does not override the importance of seeking to achieve well designed places, with paragraph 127. c) of the Framework seeking to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment. In respect of Framework paragraph 130, permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area. Further, whilst it is not for me to comment on the appropriateness or otherwise of the other roof extensions within the locality, as well as the other examples cited by the appellant, each case must be assessed on its own merits.
6. The Framework is quite clear in that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining a proposal, and that a balanced judgement will be required in weighing such proposals that directly affect such assets; having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset (para. 197).
7. The appellant sought pre-application advice on the re-submission; and in reality the only real change to the design than that previously before my colleague, was the change from a pair of separate dormers to 1no enlarged single dormer on the front elevation. Nonetheless it is quite clear that the informal Officer opinion was that the proposal remained unacceptable, therefore a refusal of planning permission should not have come as any great surprise to the appellant. I accept that there appears to be no information available as to why the subject building was locally listed and therefore given the BoTM designation. However, as I have found above, the existing butterfly roof is a good example of vernacular architecture which, as can be seen due south of the appeal site, is a historic feature that has been eroded in the past. I have been provided with information regarding the recent approval of planning permission for a roof extension at no241, however that building has not been identified as a BoTM, and is adjoining another that has been similarly extended. It is however an unfortunate decision bearing in mind the Council's case in respect of this appeal.
8. I note that the appellant's heritage addendum considered that the butterfly roof was of relatively low significance, however I disagree with this contention. Furthermore, I also note that the submitted photographs attempt to illustrate views of the appeal site from the east, although the view from North Road in particular (fig.8) appears to have been carefully selected so as to ensure that the scheme is put in an as favourable light as possible. Fig.9 does show the view of the site from the eastern end of the railway bridge, but no photograph has been provided from the top of the steps at its western end which gives direct and close range views of it.
9. Ultimately, the proposal would give rise to a box-like structure being imposed upon the inverted roof, and whilst I accept that its rear eaves line would be maintained, the overall original recessive form of the roof would be lost, along with its historic character. I accept that the replacement of the existing windows and doors to a more traditional design would give rise to an improvement on the current situation, nonetheless it is proposed that these be uPVC

¹ Ref. APP/L5810/W/15/3139067

replacements and therefore I'm not convinced that a non-timber product would better reveal the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

10. I sympathise with the appellant's desire to continue residing at the appeal site and to create a family home, respectfully however I consider that residential occupation of a property is generally transitory whereas the alterations proposed would amount to a permanent change.
11. It is quite clear that there is a requirement for additional family sized homes within the Borough and whilst I acknowledge that the greatest percentage need is for three bedroom dwellings, and that the site is in an accessible location where greater housing densities are deemed to be acceptable, these factors in support of the proposal do not outweigh the harm that it would cause to the character and appearance of the area. I say this also having regard to the appellant's points advanced in respect of noise and air quality, as well as energy efficiency. However, Planning policy and guidance from other London Boroughs is not relevant to this appeal as they do not form part of the Development Plan for Richmond upon Thames. The Framework clearly supports the use of air-space above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes pursuant to its paragraph 118. e), but it also requires such schemes to be well designed, including complying with any local design policies and standards.
12. I find by reason of its overall bulk, scale and design, that the proposed roof extension would give rise to a visually over-dominant and intrusive form of development that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the BoTM and the wider area, especially when viewed from North Road and the adjacent footbridge. The proposal is contrary to Policies LP1 and LP4 of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Local Plan 2018 which require all development to be of high architectural quality and that the character and heritage of the Borough be maintained and enhanced where opportunities arise, in addition to seeking to preserve and where possible enhance the significance, character and setting of non-designated heritage assets.
13. I also find the proposal conflicts with the Council's House Extensions and External Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2015) which stipulates that raising the ridge of a building is normally unacceptable, that roof extensions should not dominate the original roof and that existing roof profiles should be kept whilst ensuring sensitivity to existing character.

Conclusion

14. Having regard to the above and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

C J Tivey

INSPECTOR