



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 May 2021

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/D/20/3266122

1A Sandrock Road, London SE13 7SZ

- 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 Craig against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/20/118043, dated 19 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of an additional storey at roof level, installation of roof lights within the side roof slope, access to a roof terrace at roof level, and alterations to the first and second floor external skin and appearance.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the application was determined, the London Plan 2021 has been adopted ('LP'), and the policies from the London Plan 2016, which were referred to in the Council's decision, are now superceded. The principal parties were given an opportunity to comment on the LP during the appeal.
3. I have taken the property's postcode from the application form, although I note that elsewhere it is cited as SE13 7TS.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - The character and appearance of the host property and the area; and
 - The living conditions at 39 Loampit Hill, with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The long rows of terraced properties along Sandrock Road are set back a similar distance from the highway. Viewed from it, they have a consistent style and form, with regular, vertically proportioned windows. Notwithstanding occasional examples of cladding and render, most are finished in a mix of red and yellow brickwork, and retain features typical of their era, such as two storey bay windows, open timber porches, and ornate detailing. This gives the road an attractive sense of cohesion.

6. In that context, the former commercial building at 1A Sandrock Road ('No 1A'), which stands at the end of a terrace, stands out as an anomaly. It is lower in height compared to its neighbours, and to the front it has a single storey, flat-roofed projection with horizontal windows adjacent to the pavement. That projection, and the two storey gable, stand notably forward of the prevailing building line.
7. As a result of this proposal, the host's two storey front projection would be extended upwards to create a second floor. Whilst that would bring the building's height closer to, but still below, others in the road, it would also significantly increase its bulk and dominance, thus increasing its visual impact, and highlighting its incongruity in this otherwise harmonious streetscene.
8. The design seeks to stimulate visual interest, and I have no doubt that the proposed recyclable Corten steel cladding on the upper floors and roof is a high quality, contemporary finish, which could be quickly applied with minimal disruption, and whose rusty colour would respond to the road's red masonry.
9. The appellant has also referred me to 18 Ashby Road nearby, where the Council has accepted that finish on a site which, unlike here, is in a conservation area. However, that building stands somewhat apart from its neighbours in an area of mixed architecture. On this property, in this location, in drawing visual attention to the building, the proposed materials would exacerbate the harm caused as a result of its increased bulk.
10. Whilst seen in isolation, the proposed design would not harm the host property itself, given its context it would harm the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, it would conflict with Objective 10 and Policy 15 of the Lewisham Core Strategy 2011 ('LCS'), and Policies DM 30 and DM 31 of the Lewisham Development Management Local Plan 2014 ('LDMLP'). Amongst other things, whilst seeking to optimise the potential of sites, these require that development is sensitive to local context, responds to local character, and has a positive relationship with the townscape. Although I have not been directed to any specific LP policies, the scheme would conflict with its broadly similar stance.
11. It would also fail to accord with the approach in the Lewisham Alterations and Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2019 ('SPD') which requires additional storeys and roof extensions to consider the surrounding context and to complement the streetscape; and with the requirement at paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework') to create high quality places.

Living conditions

12. As a result of this scheme, the host's side elevation facing 39 Loampit Hill ('No 39') would be extended upwards – according to the Council's calculations by about 2.4 metres from the eaves and ridge lines. However, other than a high level roof light serving a bathroom, it would not contain any openings above ground floor level; and the proposed second floor terrace would be located between the proposed second floor extension and 1 Sandrock Road. Consequently, the scheme would not result in significant overlooking of No 39.
13. Whilst the proposed upward extension would be apparent from the rear face and garden of No 39, it would be separated from that property by the host's

small patio area, and I observed that No 39 also sits at a slightly higher elevation. As a result, the relatively modest increase in the building's height would not give rise to a significant sense of domination.

14. Given the scheme's height and its separation from No 39, and having regard to the sun's trajectory, I conclude that it would not give rise to a significant loss of light to, or overshadowing of, that property.
15. The scheme would not therefore impact No 39's living conditions to a harmful degree. On this issue, the proposal would not conflict with those parts of LCS Policy 15, and LDMLP Policy 31 and 32, amongst whose design quality requirements are that proposals should not result in a significant loss of amenity to adjoining houses and their back gardens; nor with the stance in the LP regarding the delivery of appropriate amenity.
16. Neither would it conflict with the SPD's requirement that proposals should not result in a harmful sense of enclosure or have an overbearing, or overly dominant, impact on adjoining properties; or with the Framework's stance that development should ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other matters

17. In its favour, the scheme would enhance the living conditions at No 1A through the provision of more internal and external space, and would enable the current occupants to stay in the area. The scheme would result in a three bedroom property, which the LCS seeks to encourage, and more flexible accommodation, including space for a family and for home-working. There would also be economic and employment benefits during construction.
18. I note the appellant's dissatisfaction with the Council's handling of his application, but I have dealt with the scheme on its planning merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusions

19. For the above reasons, whilst the scheme would not impact the living conditions at 39 Loampit Hill to a harmful degree, it would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. The scheme's modest benefits would not outweigh the harm that it would cause, and it would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole. Consequently, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR