
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2021

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/D/21/3273782

5 Staines Road, Twickenham TW2 5BG

- 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 and Mrs Cairnes against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames.
 - The application Ref 20/3317/HOT, dated 22 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a first floor extension over part of the existing and original house at ground floor.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The Council has referred to an inconsistency between the drawings that illustrate the side elevation, first floor layout and the roof of the proposal. While I have taken this point into account, the drawings that illustrate the appeal scheme are sufficiently clear to understand the development sought and to allow a reasonable assessment to be made of it.

Main issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development firstly, on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area; and secondly, on the living conditions of the occupiers of 7 Staines Road with particular regard to visual impact.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal dwelling is one half of a broadly matching pair of semi-detached Victorian villas, which are 3 and 5 Staines Road. This pair is set back from the road behind boundary walls and identified as a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM), as is 7 Staines Road on the other side of the site. This designation signifies that the buildings are considered to be of visual, architectural or historic merit even though they are not statutorily listed. The site does not fall within a conservation area.
5. Like its attached counterpart, No 5 has walls of stock brick and features sliding sash windows, a shallow pitched roof and projecting eaves. The pair has a strong symmetry in terms of the 2-storey built form, pattern of fenestration,

high quality detailing and use of traditional materials. This arrangement gives the pair a strong sense of unity and a cohesion that is locally distinctive.

6. The proposed side addition would be placed on top of the existing ground floor side projection with external materials and detailing to match the existing dwelling. The pattern of openings would be keeping with the style and general appearance of the main house.
7. Although modest in size, the width of the new addition would comfortably exceed more than one half the width of the original house, in conflict with the advice in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document, *House Extensions and External Alterations* (SPD). Despite a noticeable set back from the front wall of the main house, the new addition would still be prominent in views from the road. Due to its considerable width and bulk, the appeal scheme would not appear subservient to the host property. By extending the apparent 2-storey width of the front elevation, the proposal would appear awkward. As a result, it would fail to relate appropriately to the host building. Moreover, the additional built form would upset the general symmetry between Nos 3 and 5, which is a distinctive feature of the BTM, by unbalancing their principal elevations.
8. Although the ground floor side projection of No 5 establishes a substantial built form at ground floor level up to the shared boundary with No 7, the gap above it establishes a clear visual break between these properties. As a result, No 5 is unmistakably part of a pair and it is separate to and distinct from No 7. By ensuring that these built forms are visually 'read' in this way from the road, the gap between them at first floor level and above performs an important function in the local townscape. It safeguards their individuality.
9. The new side extension would reduce the space between Nos 5 and 7 by introducing additional built form at first floor level close to the shared boundary with the adjacent property. When seen from the road in front of the site, the new side extension would clearly draw the appeal dwelling much closer to the flank wall of No 7. By closing the gap above ground floor level between Nos 5 and 7 in this way, the proposal would unduly erode the important townscape function of the space that visually separates these 2 buildings.
10. For all of these reasons, the proposal would introduce a discordant element. It would diminish the significance of No 5 and those on either side as BTMs and have a deleterious effect on the character and appearance of the local area.
11. Within the local area, I saw that buildings vary in scale, design and age with some closer to neighbouring properties than others and several that included 2-storey side projections with flat roofs. It may be, as the appellants assert, that the Council has approved a number of these side extensions. However, few details have been provided of these cases and so I cannot be sure that their circumstances are the same or very similar to those of the proposal. In any event, each development should be assessed on its own merits. Having done so, I find that it is the specific relationship between the proposal and the host building and to the properties on each side that is objectionable.
12. That relationship differs to the contemporary style extension that was allowed on appeal¹ at 9 Staines Road in 2013 to which the appellants have referred.

¹ Reference APP/L5810/D/13/2190988 dated 12 March 2013

From the information provided, the scheme to enlarge No 9 differed in design to the proposal before me and I saw that No 9 is a detached property that occupies a backland site, well away from and only partly visible from the road. On that basis, there are few direct parallels to be drawn between the appeal decision at No 9 and the proposal before me. Consequently, I attach limited weight to this previous decision in support of the appellants' case.

13. On the first main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would significantly harm the character and appearance of the host building, the pair to which it belongs and the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policies LP 1 and LP 4 of the Council's Local Plan (LP) and the SPD. These policies and guidance aim to ensure that development achieves a high design quality; respects and enhances the local environment and character; and preserves if not enhances non-designated heritage assets such as BTMs.
14. It would be contrary to the updated revised National Planning Policy Framework (2021) insofar as it requires new development to add to the overall qualities of the local area and be sympathetic to local character. These requirements remain unchanged from those cited in the earlier version of the Framework to which the main parties have referred.

Living conditions

15. The flank wall of the extension would be up to the shared boundary with No 7. From the photographs provided, the rear outdoor space of this adjacent property would be partly enclosed by the new sidewall and it is likely that the proposal would be visible from here and through some of the rear windows. Nevertheless, there is an existing single storey rear projection alongside the common boundary with the site's boundary and a wall of significant height just beyond it. From the information provided, the main outlook from the rear of No 7, across its long garden would be largely unaffected. Whilst the new flank wall would be evident at close range from the rear of No 7, neither its height nor its depth would cause it to be so imposing as to overbear. I also note that the occupiers of No 7 raise no objection.
16. On the second main issue, I conclude that the living conditions of the occupiers of No 7 would not be materially reduced. Therefore, the appeal scheme would not conflict with LP Policy LP 8 or the SPD insofar as they aim to safeguard residential amenity. My favourable finding does not outweigh the harm that I have identified in relation to the first main issue.

Other matters

17. The proposal was refined in the light of pre-application advice provided by the Council. An interested party supports the proposal. Once complete, the appeal scheme would provide valuable additional living space and thus improve the living conditions of the appellants. However, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR