
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/Z5630/D/21/3274890

8 Kingswood Close, Surbiton KT6 6DZ

- 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 Colin Geere against the decision of the Council of The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.
 - The application Ref 21/00698/HOU, dated 5 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 30 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of existing tile and weatherboard cladding to front elevation with new fibrous cement shiplap cladding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a 3-storey dwelling in a terrace of similar properties that face Kingswood Close within a predominantly residential area. Because the design and external materials above the ground floor of the terrace are largely consistent across its entire front elevation, the appearance of the upper building has a strong uniformity. When seen from the road, there is a high level of coherence to the terrace, which is locally distinctive.
4. Aside from the ground floor frontages of properties in the terrace, there is little evidence of any substantial alteration to this group of dwellings and so the original, cohesively planned, character remains clearly evident. While the terrace has a more modern appearance than more historic properties that are often found within conservation areas, the original 1970s style of the properties is retained in this case. To my mind, the consistency in appearance and materials enhances the character of the row of properties, which visually 'read' as a distinct group from a particular time period. That said, the site does not fall within an area that is recognised for its special character.
5. The proposal is to install new grey fibrous cement shiplap cladding as an external facing material to those areas of the front elevation of No 8 where white uPVC shiplap cladding and hexagonal shaped concrete tiles are in place. Details or samples of the precise material to be used could be covered by a condition if planning permission were to be granted.

6. The silhouette and form of No 8 would not be significantly affected by the proposal and certain features of the host building would remain unaltered such as the facing brickwork that marks the party walls between dwellings in the terrace. However, the external appearance of the appeal dwelling would significantly change as a result. It would represent the first addition of its kind along this row of properties and as a result the coherence that currently exists along the front elevations would be lost. Views of the proposal would be evident from the road due to extensive use of the new cladding across 3 horizontal panels and their elevated position on the host building. When seen from Kingswood Close the finished dwelling would draw the eye among the remaining properties in the terrace due to the incongruity of the new cladding.
7. I recognise that different types of cladding can often be found on properties of similar age to No 8 but it is the coherence of the group of dwellings that is a key feature here. Furthermore, the extent of cladding proposed, covering much of the upper front of the property, would be substantially at odds with the established theme. To my mind, the proposal would give the main façade a monolithic appearance, notwithstanding the stepped profile of dwellings in the terrace, in contrast current arrangement where uPVC and plain tiles visually 'break up' the mass of the front elevation.
8. A second alternative proposal¹ is before me that additionally shows full-length doors with grey uPVC frames in place of the existing garage door together with a new entrance door and glazed side panels. These ground floor alterations may relate to a proposal to convert the garage to habitable accommodation to which the appellant has referred. These particular changes would distinguish the property from neighbouring dwellings in the same terrace. However, in contrast to the proposed cladding above, this element of the appeal scheme would not look out of place or be obtrusive among the varied ground floor frontages of dwellings in the wider terrace. Nevertheless, the proposed fibrous cement shiplap cladding is unacceptable for the reasons given.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that decisions should ensure that development proposals are sympathetic to local character whilst not discouraging innovation or change. Additions can make a positive contribution by adding visual interest to a building without necessarily requiring matching or replicating existing materials. However, in this instance, the coherent use of materials is an essential part of the planned character of the group. The proposed changes would fail to reflect the planned arrangement and the cohesive group value would be substantially diminished as a result.
10. On the main issue, I find that the proposed development would have a significantly adverse visual effect on the character and appearance of the local area. Accordingly, fails to comply with Policy D3 of the London Plan and Policies CS 8 and DM 10 of the Council's Core Strategy (CS). Together, these policies aim to ensure that new development incorporates principles of good design and respects those elements that contribute to local character and distinctiveness. As CS Policy DM 12 primarily concerns development in conservation areas and schemes that affect heritage assets, which do not apply in this instance, it is less directly relevant to the proposal.
11. The appellant states that the uppermost cladding panel of the front elevation could be painted in any colour or replaced with a material that is similar in

¹ Drawing number 2021-01-08

nature and appearance, or both, through the exercise of permitted development (PD) rights. According to the appellant, the existing concrete tiles could be painted in a different colour or replaced on a similar basis. However, these eventualities would have less visual impact than the proposal, which relates to 3 horizontal panels that cover a larger expanse of the front elevation. The existence of PD rights is insufficient reason to permit what is an unacceptable form of development.

12. I saw that some buildings in the local area that date from a similar era as No 8 have been externally altered including along Oakhill. However, none of the examples were directly comparable to the proposal nor occupied the same or a very similar street scene to that of No 8. Consequently, these examples do not weigh in support of the appellant's case.
13. The proposal would improve the thermal performance of the dwelling that the appellant says can only be achieved by installing new cladding. I acknowledge that obtaining concrete tiles that match their existing counterparts is not possible because they are no longer available. If the existing front façade is left unattended then the condition of some materials could deteriorate even further with obvious implications for the condition and appearance of the host building. However, there is nothing to suggest that these matters could not be addressed and resolved in a manner that would better reflect the established character of the group. Accordingly, while these issues are acknowledged, they do not attract sufficient weight to outweigh the harm that I have identified.
14. I note that the informal response to the appellant's consultation with neighbours revealed unanimous support for the proposal with a close neighbour indicating a desire to progress a similar scheme. There were no objections from others during the formal application process. I have also taken into account the exchange of correspondence provided between the appellant and the Council during the application process.
15. The appellant is also critical of the Council in its handling of the application and says that it failed to engage positively despite the encouragement to do so by government policy set out in the Framework. While I have had regard to all of these matters, my assessment is on the planning merits of the appeal scheme.

Conclusion

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

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR