

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 October 2021

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 November 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/21/3276240

36A St Stephens Gardens, Twickenham TW1 2LS

- 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 Richard Cullen against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames.
 - The application Ref 20/2736/FUL, dated 30 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'replacement of wooden framed single glazed front windows with wooden framed double glazing windows. Stained glass and dental mouldings included. Project undertaken for energy efficiency purposes whilst preserving the original characteristics to the extent that this is possible'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was issued in July 2021. However, the relevant paragraphs concerning the historic environment referred to by the Council are unchanged between the previous and current versions.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed replacement front windows would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Cambridge Park Conservation Area, in which the appeal property is located.

Reasons

4. The Cambridge Park Conservation Area comprises predominantly residential streets with attractive period properties and adjoins a number of other surrounding designated areas. St Stephens Gardens includes late Victorian or Edwardian red brick semi-detached dwellings. These dwellings make a positive contribution to the conservation area through their largely unaltered and uniform design and appearance. The appeal property is recognised as a Building of Townscape Merit and is subject to an Article 4 Direction for conservation.
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5. Most properties in St Stephens Gardens, including No 36A, have casement windows to the front with stained glass details, which are a notable characteristic of the road according to the *Cambridge Park Conservation Area Study*. The related conservation area statement indicates that problems and pressures include loss of traditional architectural features and materials due to unsympathetic alterations; while conversely, opportunities include preservation, enhancement and reinstatement of architectural quality and unity.
6. Consequently, while the original stained glass has been removed in some properties in the road, this should not be seen as a precedent for removal or substantive change to such original features that are acknowledge to be an important characteristic of this part of the conservation area. I note also that the appellant refers to several properties with standard thickness double glazing. However, as I observed during the inspection, the majority of neighbouring properties appear to include the original form of timber windows with single glazing and stained glass details.
7. I acknowledge that the proposed replacement windows are designed to complement the original period features and that such replacement is not precluded as a matter of principle. However, I share the Council's concerns that the replacement stained glass and moulding are unlikely to be able to replicate fully those of the original windows and that some of the detailing may be lost. I note in this regard the Conservation Officer's comment that this type of decorative glass has been retained where double glazing has been added in some properties. Moreover, the thickness of the additional glazing is likely to be apparent. These differences would be heightened due to the visual context of the largely unaltered neighbouring properties, with original windows closely juxtaposed with the replacement ones proposed here. As such, the proposal would harmfully alter an original feature of the area.
8. Given the above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Cambridge Park Conservation Area. In reaching this view I am particularly mindful of the statutory requirement that in exercising planning functions in conservation areas special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area¹. The Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation². Based on the above findings, I consider the harm to be less than substantial in this instance, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
9. Under such circumstances, the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal³. The appellant refers to the environmental, acoustic and security benefits of the proposed double glazing and that the windows are in need of repair, which I acknowledge. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm that has been found. No other public benefits have been put forward given that this is a proposal for alterations to a private residential property.

¹ Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

² Paragraph 199.

³ Paragraph 202.

10. Therefore, for the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed replacement windows would not preserve the character and appearance of the Cambridge Park Conservation Area. Consequently, the proposal is contrary to the following policies from the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Local Plan (2018): LP1, which seeks to maintain and, where possible, enhance the high architectural and urban design quality which contributes to the character and heritage of the area; LP3, concerning the conservation and enhancement of designated heritage assets; and LP4, which requires development to preserve the significance, character and setting of non-designated heritage assets, including Buildings of Townscape Merit. The proposal is also contrary to the Framework, as described above.

Other Matters

11. While I have had regard to the representations made by interested parties in support of the proposal, there are no additional matters raised in relation to the main issue in this appeal that would lead me to reach a different overall conclusion.
12. I note that the appellant did not receive a response to correspondence seeking clarification on the basis for refusal of the application. However, such procedural matters are outside the scope of this appeal.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above it is concluded that the appeal should not succeed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR