



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 29 July 2021 by B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/D/21/3271352

10 Roman Road, Chiswick, London, W4 1NA

- 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 Gower against the decision of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 01250/10/P3, dated 18 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is the excavation and construction of a single storey basement underneath the existing building footprint of the property and partly under the side garden, with front and side light wells and one walk-on glass paving light to side garden.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Government published on 20 July 2021 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The parties have been provided with a further opportunity to make submissions in respect of the publication.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing property, street scene and Bedford Park Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The Bedford Park Conservation Area Appraisal sets out the special interest of the CA, noting that Bedford Park is probably the best-known and best-preserved later Victorian suburb in outer London, the novelty of which is a combination of trees and green spaces with 'artistically designed' houses of moderate size. It sets out that, *"Bedford Park was the first example where the relaxed, informal mood of a market town or village was adopted for a complete speculatively built suburb of asymmetric but carefully composed architect-designed buildings"*.

6. The appeal site comprises a semi-detached 'cottage' style property located on the corner of Roman Road and Flanders Road, within the CA. Both streets are characterised by similar, large, Victorian, mostly semi-detached properties. The host property has been extended previously to create a 5-bedroom dwelling but still retains the architectural detailing typical of the suburb. Therefore, it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA.
7. The proposed basement would extend under the entire footprint of the dwelling and would therefore substantially increase the floorspace of the property. The majority would not be visible however, and as such it would not be obvious by how much the host dwelling had been extended. Nevertheless, the presence of a basement would be evident from the lightwells proposed.
8. The lightwells at the side would be screened from public view by the tall close boarded boundary fence and as such would have little impact on the character and appearance of the host property or the CA. The front lightwell and grille would however be clearly visible from the road over the existing low fence. This would evidence the presence of a lower floor, particularly during hours of darkness when illumination of the room would result in light spill upwards. Given the limited size of the front garden and low fence, it has not been demonstrated that the lightwell or any light spill could be screened by planting to mitigate this impact. A previous permission to alter the front boundary has expired and there is no evidence before me that permission exists for a replacement that would screen this part of the proposal.
9. The front lightwell would therefore make the presence of a basement obvious. Such a feature would be uncharacteristic of Roman Road and the wider CA, where the moderate sized, cottage style dwellings were built without basements or cellars. While this may have been a result of the poor conditions provided by such accommodation at that time, it is nevertheless a characteristic of this suburb, which comprises lower density development without the basements commonly found in townhouse development and other parts of London. It also reflects the design ethos under which the suburb was built. These are part of what sets Bedford Park apart from other areas and contribute to the special interest and significance of the CA.
10. There is a similarly sized lightwell and grille to the front of 19 Flanders Road, granted planning permissions in 2015 and 2017. The visual impact of the lightwell is limited, even accounting for the small front garden. However, it does clearly denote a subterranean floor, and the character of the property has been altered as a result, and is noticeably different to the surrounding properties in the otherwise largely consistent street scene of Flanders Road. I have not been made aware of any front lightwells in Roman Road, and the one at No 19 is not seen together with the appeal site. Therefore, the character of Roman Road remains largely consistent with the design ethos of the CA, despite various alterations and extensions to the dwellings.
11. Consequently, a basement with front lightwell would be an incongruous addition to the street scene of the type that the Council's Residential extension Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) seeks to avoid. For these reasons the proposal would harmfully alter the appearance of the host property and would not therefore preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. Due to the limited size of the lightwell and flush grille design the harm to the CA as a whole would be slight, and less than substantial in terms of the

Framework. Having regard to Framework paragraph 202 it must be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

12. The provision of additional accommodation and the ability to stay in and adapt this house rather than move would be a private benefit to the appellants. Given the scale of the already extended dwelling, it has not been demonstrated that additional floor space is necessary for it to provide suitable and viable residential accommodation.
13. The proposal would not result in a loss of spaciousness or changes to gaps between properties and would not affect original fabric, however these are neutral factors. It would not result in the loss of front garden and there would be opportunities to provide more soft landscaping, which would improve the appearance of the site and CA and contribute to biodiversity. These public benefits could however be achieved without the proposed development, so I afford them very limited weight. I find that they do not outweigh the harm to the significance of the CA, which is a matter of considerable weight and importance.
14. Accordingly, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the existing property, street scene and CA, and there are no material considerations that would outweigh the harm. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies CC1, CC2, CC4 and SC7 of the Local Plan 2015-2030 Volume One, which collectively seek to retain, promote and support high quality urban design, secure development that sensitively responds to an area's character and complements the original building, and conserve and take opportunities to enhance the significance of the borough's heritage assets. Furthermore, it would conflict with the aims of the SPD which, while recognising the potential benefits of basement accommodation, sets out that they should not harm the character of the property or the surrounding area.

Other Matters

15. I acknowledge that letters of support were received, however I have reached a different conclusion on the matter of design for the reasons above. Given my findings it is not necessary for me to consider the impacts of construction or effects on neighbours further.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. For the reasons given above, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

B Phillips

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

L McKay

INSPECTOR