



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 24 November 2021

by Andrew McGlone BSc MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 DECEMBER 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/D/21/3282841

6 Alma Road, London SW18 1AB

- 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 Thomas Dear against the decision of London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2021/1872, dated 20 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is alterations including the formation of a vehicle crossover and hardstanding in front garden and replacement front boundary.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for alterations including the formation of a vehicle crossover and hardstanding in front garden and replacement front boundary at 6 Alma Road, London SW18 1AB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 2021/1872, dated 20 April 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan, Existing and Proposed Plans and Existing and Proposed Elevations.
 - 3) Within 3 months of the date of this decision details and samples of the materials proposed to be used on the boundary treatment of the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved materials and thereafter retained.
 - 4) Prior to the development being first brought into use a scheme for new soft landscaping shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants noting species, plant supply sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate. The approved scheme shall be carried out prior to the use of the development, or in accordance with a programme agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council, in September 2021, according to the appellant, issued a Certificate of Lawfulness for the formation of a vehicular crossover and hardstanding and installation of a front wall and gates 1 metre high at the

appeal property. Construction of the hardstanding is said to have commenced, and the vehicular crossover has been approved, but I do not have precise details of either, copies of the plans or the Council's decision. As such, I have considered the appeal scheme on its own planning merits, but I understand the key difference between the two schemes is the height of the boundary wall.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the Wandsworth Town Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a three-storey semi-detached family dwelling on the eastern side of Alma Road in the Conservation Area. The special character of Conservation Area is derived from its historic development and street pattern which remains in this day. The appeal property forms part of a late Victorian grid of streets in an attractive townscape comprising of Gothic Revival villas. Householders in the area have made sympathetic alterations which have generally maintained the traditional appearance of houses. The Wandsworth Town Conservation Area Appraisal (Draft) does not identify hardstanding's to the front of properties as an issue affecting the Conservation Area.
5. Numerous properties on Alma Road benefit from off-street parking to the front using a large area of hardstanding. Some have incorporated a tessellated tile path, others haven't. Brick boundary walls are a feature across the front boundaries of properties between the junctions of Alma Road with East Hill and Fullerton Road. There is some variation to their design and height, but generally, they are low and are at times supplemented by landscaping.
6. Even if a timber fence was the original boundary treatment, it is not characteristic of the area and it is likely to have been a replacement in any event. Its loss would not be harmful. The proposed brick wall and railings would harmonise with the character and appearance of the host property and area whilst maintaining an enclosed front garden that the Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) seeks to retain. I hold this view regardless of whether the brick wall at 4 Alma Road benefits from planning permission. A wider gap would be formed in the front boundary to allow vehicular movements on and off the road, but this gap would be proportionate and not out of character given the various gaps found along Alma Road.
7. The attractive tessellated tile path to the front door would be retained. There is no substantive evidence of other tessellated paths not being retained due to wear and tear from vehicles crossing over them.
8. The SPD explains that front gardens less than 7 metres wide and 8 metres deep are unlikely to accommodate a car without harming the setting of the house and street scene. However, a car could fit on site and whilst a small section of hedgerow would be removed, the rest of it would be kept along with shrubbery to the boundary with No 4 and two trees. Further low-level planting would be added. The provision of hedges and trees is recommended by the SPD. Collectively the landscaping would soften the proposed new wall, railings and hardstanding. Therefore, the proposal would not dominate the appearance of the front garden or cause harm to the character and appearance of the street or the setting or significance of the Conservation Area.

9. I conclude that the proposed development would preserve the Wandsworth Town Conservation Area in compliance with Policy IS3 of the Core Strategy, Policies DMS 1, DMS 2 and DMH 5 of the Development Management Policies Document, and the SPD. They jointly seek, among other things, well designed alterations and hardstanding's that do not dominate the appearance of front gardens or cause harm to the character or appearance of the dwelling or the street. Developments should sustain, conserve and reinforce the borough's character and the significance, appearance and setting of the heritage asset so that the development contributes positively to the local environment and are visually attractive.

Conditions

10. I have imposed a plans condition in the interests of certainty. The appellant has stated that pre-commencement conditions would not be suitable in this case due to works commencing following the issue of a Certificate of Lawfulness. I understand their logic, but any conditions that I impose would relate to the proposal before me and not any other scheme. That said, there are elements of the appeal scheme which by the appellants own admission are not the same as the Certificate of Lawfulness scheme nor am I clear which scheme the appellant may choose to implement or the progress of works on site. Thus, a standard time limit condition is necessary.
11. A condition is necessary to secure details of the materials to be used for the boundary wall to preserve the setting and thus the significance of the Conservation Area. The boundary wall in the appeal scheme is taller than what is permissible under permitted development, such that the effect may not be the same. However, I have omitted the requirement for a porous hard surface as the approved plans are clear in this respect. Also, to ensure a satisfactory appearance and to provide biodiversity interest, I have imposed a condition for a soft landscaping scheme.

Conclusion

12. The proposal would accord with the Development Plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that indicate that I should take a different decision other than in accordance with this.
13. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Andrew McGlone

INSPECTOR