



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2022

by David Smith BA(Hons) DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/W/21/3282569

Holland House, 15 The Grove, Gravesend, DA12 1DX

- 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 Old Sun Estates Properties against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20210732, dated 7 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 3 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is replacement of existing sash and casement timber windows with UPVC casement windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed windows on the character and appearance of Holland House and of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Holland House is a semi-detached, four-storey Victorian villa divided into six flats. It has a high degree of architectural interest befitting a property of this age and stature. The building appears to have its original red painted timber windows which match the attached building. It is a non-designated heritage asset and therefore the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework regarding conserving and enhancing the historic environment are applicable.
4. The street scene in this part of The Grove is very mixed with other historic houses and more modern development in both residential and commercial use. Of the nineteen houses in The Grove, only three of them retain their timber windows and replacement UPVC windows are prevalent. The appellant has also highlighted specific, similar pairs where these have been inserted. However, this means that retaining the qualities of Holland House and maintaining its symmetry with its neighbour, are all the more important.
5. As well as complementing No 16, the timber windows are an important part of the overall composition of Holland House that contribute significantly to its value. The replacement windows attempt to reflect the pattern of divisions but the rails and surrounds would be much thicker so the refinement of the current sections together with other details would be lost. The proposed UPVC windows would lack the elegance of the existing and therefore would adversely affect the significance of the building. Moreover, their finish is likely to be glossy and bland which would stand out compared to painted timber.

6. Because the proposal would be noticeably different to the fenestration at the adjoining property, the existing unified appearance of these linked buildings would be compromised. As such, the new windows would appear as strident and discordant when seen from The Grove and so would detract from the street scene. The existing windows or new timber ones could be painted a different colour to those at No 16. However, the authentic, traditional windows would still remain and could be re-painted in future. This possible eventuality therefore does not justify the proposal.
7. Paragraph 203 of the Framework requires a balanced judgement to be made for development affecting non-designated heritage assets having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the asset. In this respect, Holland House is valuable in itself but is also one of the pre-eminent buildings in this section of The Grove. The alterations proposed would be significantly detrimental and this puts the level of harm that would occur towards the upper end of the scale. Furthermore, an appeal regarding modern UPVC windows at No 16 was dismissed in 2013. As consistency of decision-making is important this is a further consideration that weighs against the proposal.
8. The existing windows are said to be draughty. Replacing them would improve insulation and reduce heat loss thereby contributing towards climate change mitigation. There would also be cost savings on maintenance which may assist the owners in continuing to offer the flats for rent. However, the Framework stresses that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Because the proposal would spoil the façade of this fine pair of villas, these considerations do not outweigh the harm identified.
9. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy sets development and design principles. Amongst other things, this expects development to make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area and for account to be taken of the significance of heritage assets. As the effect on the character and appearance of Holland House and the surrounding area would be a negative one the proposal would be contrary to this policy.

Conclusion

10. The proposed windows would not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations to outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.

David Smith

INSPECTOR