



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 February 2022

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/A5270/W/21/3275707

71 Monks Drive, Acton W3 0ED

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission
 - The appeal is made by Mr Gus Romano-Jackson against London Borough of Ealing.
 - The application Ref 211951HH, is dated 16 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is a glazed porch addition to front of property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission for a glazed porch addition to front of property is refused.

Main Issue

2. The appeal arises from the Council's failure to make a decision on the application. The Council has submitted a statement setting out how it would have been determined. Based on this statement and all the evidence before me, I consider that the main issue is whether the proposal preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Hanger Hill Garden Estate Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. 71 Monks Drive lies within the Hanger Hill Garden Estate Conservation Area (the CA). This heritage asset derives its significance from being a planned residential estate that was built in a comparatively short period between 1928 and 1936. The houses are tightly aligned along roads that are arranged in distinctive patterns, whilst the purpose-built blocks of flats are laid out within spacious communal gardens. There is a uniform mock Tudor architectural character across the CA, with half-timbered facades, leaded window lights and a predominance of brick and plain clay tiles. There is an abundance of street trees, green spaces, and front gardens enclosed with privet hedges. All of these features combine to give the CA a very distinct and homogenous garden suburb character.
4. Together with No 69, the house is one of a symmetrical pair at the southern end of a terrace of six. The pair has a half-timbered twin gable that projects over a brick ground floor bay window. The front doors are recessed under the overhang of the cat-slide roof to either side of the gable. This pair of house-types is repeated at the northern end of the terrace, giving the whole group a high degree of symmetry. The house has all of the design characteristics and materials that are characteristic of the CA, together with an enclosed front

garden. It therefore makes a positive contribution to the significance of the heritage asset.

5. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
6. The Council's CA Management Plan (2009) identifies that the character of the heritage asset is under threat of incremental erosion by unsympathetic, poorly designed and executed extensions and alterations, including glass front porches. To provide greater protection for the special character of the heritage asset, the Council made an Article 4¹ direction in 2002, which removed permitted development rights for porches, amongst other things. Section 5.5 of the Management Plan states that the erection of enclosed front porches and the alteration of hoods above front doors will not be permitted.
7. The proposed glazed porch would infill the area under the cat-slide roof to the side of the bay. As a result, the characterful symmetry of the pair, and the terrace of six, as a whole, would be eroded. The shared gable, with cat-slide roofs and recessed front doors, is a highly distinctive feature, which is regularly repeated along Monks Drive, contributing positively to the balance of the street scene. Although the appellant contends that there are many porches in the CA, I saw that none of the other nine pairs of houses of this type in Monks Drive had an enclosed area under the cat-slide roof.
8. The articulation of the built frontage, provided by the generously proportioned bays, and recessed front doors, provides a pleasing sense of rhythm along this rigidly aligned row of buildings. The proposed porch would be a disruptive feature in this frontage, and would appear discordant due to its narrow width, right angled corner, and awkward junction with the existing bay window. The loss of relief as a result of the infilling of the recess would result in a flat frontage, that would be out of keeping with the character of the street. It would, therefore, be harmful to the appearance of the CA.
9. In coming to this conclusion, I have considered the other porches in the CA that have been drawn to my attention. Those at Ayr Court, directly opposite the site, are large communal porches covering the entrance doors to the blocks of flats that are arranged in courtyard fashion. The buildings are, therefore of a different scale and pattern than the linear terrace of houses. In any event, the porches are identically designed, and appear to be part of the original planned layout, so they do not affect my conclusion on the appeal scheme.
10. The porches at 66 and 68 Princes Gardens are of greater relevance, because they have been added to a similar pair of houses, and occupy the recesses below the cat slides. They have, therefore, harmed the original character and symmetry of the buildings. However, the evidence indicates that planning permission for these additions was given in 1993 and 1982, before the CA Management Plan was adopted. Those at 5 and 7 Vale Road are in a different house type, and, although I do not have any evidence of their planning history, they also appear to be of some age. To my mind, rather than setting a precedent for the appeal proposal, these examples illustrate the harm that small-scale, incremental changes can make to the distinctive architectural unity

¹ Article 4 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

of the CA, which is such an important element in its significance as a heritage asset. They do not, therefore, weigh in favour of the proposal.

11. The appellant contends that all of the houses in Monks Drive have been altered to some extent. I saw some rooflights, some variety in roof tiles and the large flat-roofed dormer on the adjacent house. The appellant draws attention to other examples in his evidence. However, despite these alterations, the overall layout, architecture, and materials of the originally planned estate remain remarkably intact, giving the CA a coherence that contributes to its significance as a heritage asset. The proposed porch would be harmful to this cohesion, and I therefore conclude that it would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
12. The harm that I have identified would be limited to a relatively small part of the CA, so would be less than substantial for the purposes of paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Nevertheless, paragraphs 199 and 200 state that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, and that any harm to, or loss of, their significance should require clear and convincing justification.
13. Paragraph 202 requires that, where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development. In this regard, there would be some environmental benefit arising from the development, as the porch would improve the energy efficiency of the house. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this is the only means of achieving this aim. Consequently, although I give some weight to this benefit, it does not outweigh the great weight that the Framework gives to the conservation of heritage assets.
14. In summary, the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the CA, which is not outweighed by public benefits. The development would, therefore, be contrary to Policies HC1, D3 and D4 of The London Plan (2021), Policy 1.2 of the Development Strategy 2026 Development Plan Document (2012), and Policies 7.4, 7B and 7C of Ealing's Development Management Development Plan Document (2013). Taken together, these policies seek to conserve the significance of heritage assets, and to ensure high-quality design that is responsive to the context of the site. The proposal would also conflict with the Framework's aim of conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR