



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 February 2022

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/G3110/W/21/3280991

192 Iffley Road, Oxford OX4 1SD

- 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 Ms Sian Evans against the decision of Oxford City Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01262/FUL, dated 30 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as a roof extension to create 5 additional guest bedrooms.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the St Clement's & Iffley Road Conservation Area (the CA), which is a designated heritage asset, including its effect on the significance of No.190 Iffley Road which is a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. No.192 Iffley Road is a detached house in the CA providing bed and breakfast accommodation. It faces the road and was built in the early C20 in an Arts and Crafts architectural style. It is at one end of a row of three similar style of buildings formed with No.190 (a historic 'building of local interest' designed by a notable architect) and No.190a, both built at around the same time as No.192. The proposal is to add an additional floor, partly within a new roof, with associated internal and external alterations. It would increase the number of guest rooms by 5, from 8 to 13.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (paragraph 189). Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification (paragraph 200). In weighing the effect of development on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (paragraph 203).
5. Policies DH1 and DH3 of the Oxford Local Plan, adopted June 2020 (the LP), seek high quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness, respects or is inspired by the historic environment and responds positively to the

significance and character of heritage assets. The development plan is therefore broadly consistent with the Framework.

6. In the Council's conservation area appraisal¹ (the CAA) Iffley Road is a discrete character area. Near the appeal site, significance derives mainly from the rows of houses along either side of this road. These are mostly large terraced and semi-detached brick built Victorian or Edwardian townhouses or detached villas standing 3, 4 or 5 storeys tall, notable in stature and presence in the streetscene. The three much smaller, mainly rendered and part timbered Arts and Crafts buildings are distinctly different to these other buildings in form and external appearance. Despite being set behind some trees they make a unique contribution to the character of the street and the absence of greater public visibility does not diminish their inherent merit. Rather than impacting negatively on their surroundings they add to the overall diversity of Iffley Road, the CA as a whole and are also rare in Oxford. They are worthy of protection for these reasons.
7. The increase in height, scale and massing of the front elevation of No.192 would reflect the general sequence of taller buildings along the road either side of Nos.190-192 and opposite. It would reinforce an already common pattern of built form. However, the innate lower and squat form of No.192 is unusual and of interest by virtue of its limited prevalence in this character area and part of the CA. The substantial increase in vertical projection of built form would significantly change the proportions of the building. The variance in eaves and ridge heights compared to No.190 and No.190a would unbalance the broadly uniform horizontal emphasis of this row of buildings.
8. In external appearance, the façade of the extended and altered parts of No.192 would retain or replicate some elements of the Arts and Crafts style, including a floor partly within the roof. However, I have not been referred to any building of this sort and composition over three floors elsewhere in this character area or in the CA. It would also be manifestly at odds with this style of architecture as it appears over two floors in the façade of No.190 and No.190a. In particular, the loss of the distinctive sequence and alignment of front gables and three cruciform windows and an inordinately extended cat-slide roof slope, with an alien box dormer window, that flows into an overly complicated triple gabled flat mansard roof. Without any provenance or context, it would appear somewhat contrived and permanently disfigure the design integrity of the building in these respects.
9. While Nos.190-192 vary in detailed design and some external dimensions (within the Arts and Crafts style) they are instantly recognisable in form and appearance. As such, they have an appreciable degree of visual consistency and a legible collective identity. The proposal would result in a significant diminution of the individual contribution of No.192 in this regard and of the group value of the three buildings taken together. Aside from a comparable transition in height and scale and massing, the architectural style of No.194 would have little or nothing in common with No.192. Its close proximity on one side would result in a jarring and incongruous juxtaposition in the appearance of these two buildings.
10. The extended and altered building would be no wider on its plot. However, the noticeable reduction in spaciousness above No.192 (including in-depth behind

¹ St Clement's & Iffley Road Conservation Area Appraisal, February 2009

the front elevation) would be observed in some views from the road, as would the significant reduction in the overall space above Nos.190-192. This feature of the streetscene is distinctly book-ended by the taller adjoining buildings and gives relief to their otherwise uniform arrangement. The proposal would result in an appreciably more built-up appearance to this part of the road and unduly accentuate the already pronounced vertical emphasis and strong sense of enclosure along these street frontages.

11. I have been referred to parts of the Council's advice on 'high buildings'². I note that while even an increase in height of a single storey may constitute a high building, this will depend on the surrounding context. Although No.192 as extended would be taller and have more floors (including compared to No.190 and No.190a), it would not exceed these parameters of most buildings in this part of the road, including next to it at No.194. It would not, therefore, be a 'high building'. Even if it was, the proposal would conflict with this advice, and the other guidance I have been referred to³, for the reasons set out above.
12. I have been provided with extracts from a dismissed appeal⁴ for a previous scheme to redevelop No.190 and No.190a. Notwithstanding the Inspector's comments on these buildings and the CA, this 2008 decision was before the publication of the CAA which is a material consideration in the current appeal. I note that the Council granted planning permission to convert No.190 and demolish No.190a. However, that scheme is not comparable to the current appeal proposal which I have considered on its individual planning merits.
13. Taking all of the above into account, the proposal would conflict with LP Policies DH1 and DH3. It would also conflict with objectives of the Framework for high quality and beautiful buildings (paragraph 126) visually attractive as a result of good architecture (paragraph 130 b)). It would not add to the overall quality of the area or be sympathetic to local character, history or the surrounding built environment and would not maintain a strong sense of place in building type or a distinctive place to live or visit (paragraphs 130 a), c) and d)).
14. Framework paragraph 199 requires me to give great weight to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. The harm to, and loss of, the significance of the CA in the terms that I have referred to above would be localised and limited to a small part of the CA. Accordingly, it would cause less than substantial harm to the CA overall. In these circumstances, Framework paragraph 202 requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
15. The roof of No.192 is in disrepair (needs to be replaced), some uPVC windows would be changed for traditional painted timber windows and the building refurbished overall. Nonetheless, these improvements would not in themselves mitigate or compensate for the harm that would be caused or justify the particular scheme promoted in this appeal. The additional guest rooms would help to sustain the business and in turn support the local visitor economy. However, despite that it would add to the stock of visitor accommodation in Oxford, there is no objective evidence of any quantitative or qualitative deficiency in this regard that is a barrier to more overnight stays. On the figures provided, while the proposal would likely generate a notable increased

² 'Oxford High Buildings' - Technical Advice Note, October 2018

³ Historic England's 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' and its 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice' in 'Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment'

⁴ APP/G3110/A/08/2066820

'spend' (albeit over 5 years) it would nonetheless be a relatively small proportion of the total value of the local visitor economy (and visitor numbers). I therefore give modest weight to these public benefits.

Other Matters

16. It is common ground that No.192 does not have any meaningful visual or spatial interrelationship with nearby listed buildings. Consequently, the proposal would not affect their special architectural or historic interest by virtue of its impact on setting. Accordingly, there would be no harm to, or loss of, the significance of these designated heritage assets and the proposal would therefore preserve the listed buildings and their settings⁵.
17. There is limited parking at No.192 but no objective evidence that the proposal would lead to parking stress. Even if on-street parking arrangements change in Iffley Road, there are side roads nearby and the Highway Authority controls access to parking permits. Iffley Road is also a bus route with convenient bus stops and some guests could travel by this means or cycle. There would be no adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of any nearby dwellings.
18. The absence of harm in these regards, and compliance with the Council's development plan and the Framework, are neutral factors in my decision.

Heritage Balance

19. I have found that Iffley Road on the whole has retained its historic integrity and aesthetic. This is mainly as a result of the high number and diversity of original buildings still lining either side of the road, including the Arts and Crafts architectural style of Nos.190-192.
20. The proposal would seriously detract from the individual contribution of No.192 in these respects and have an undesirable collateral effect on the significance of No.190. It would also fundamentally undermine the overall coherence and albeit 'moderate' but nonetheless important, cumulative value of this row of Arts and Crafts buildings and reduce diversity of built form. The extended and altered building would be an anomaly, not truly representative of the taller or smaller buildings in this part of the CA, and it would not be reconciled or assimilated into the streetscene in a satisfactory manner.
21. Consequently, the proposal would have a substantial negative affect on the intrinsic quality of the CA. It would not, therefore, preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA⁶. Accordingly, the significant harm caused would not be outweighed by the public benefits in this case.

Conclusion

22. The proposed development would not accord with the development plan overall. There are no other material considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR

⁵ Section 66(1) - Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

⁶ Section 72(1) - Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990