



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 March 2022

by G Roberts BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31ST March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1775/D/21/3289995

5 Stafford Road, Southsea, PO5 2AD

- 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 Hollie Ryan against the decision of Portsmouth City Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00818/HOU, dated 10 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is construction of two storey extension to front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area, with particular regard to the site's location within the Owen's Southsea Conservation Area.

Procedural Matters

3. I have adopted the description of the proposed development as set out in the Council's decision notice as this more accurately describes the proposal.
4. The submitted plans show a new single storey rear extension, which both the plans and the application form indicate can be constructed under permitted development. The Council's Delegated Report (CDR) states that an initial assessment found that the proposed rear extension was likely to require planning permission, but that the Council's determination of the application did not include any assessment of this aspect of the proposal. In view of this, I have also determined the appeal on the basis that it only seeks planning permission to construct a two storey extension to the front elevation.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies within the Owen's Southsea Conservation Area (OSCA). Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Similar advice is to be found in the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (Framework) and in policy PCS23 of The Portsmouth Plan (January 2012) (TPP).
6. The Council have published a document titled 'Guidelines for Conservation' for the OSCA (Guidelines), which was updated in October 2006 and is intended to provide supplementary planning guidance to the local plan. The Guidelines

state that the OSCA comprises a mixture of Victorian and Edwardian houses centred on the Palmerston Road Shopping Centre, and is an example of a Victorian suburb largely the work of the Architect, Thomas Ellis Owen. The Guidelines continue by stating that the value of the area to the character of Southsea, as a whole, has increased over the years, notwithstanding the fact that more recent development has eroded some of its local distinctiveness. The main purpose of the Guidelines is to prevent further decay of the area's character as well as consolidating and enhancing its townscape quality.

7. Stafford Road, which includes the appeal site, is referred to in section 4.0, part xi of the Guidelines as an area comprising late Victorian villas and semi-detached houses, such as the host property, in a variety of materials, mainly brick and render but including stone and flint. The road, as with others in this part of the OSCA, is also identified as having distinct building lines, with most properties benefitting from retained boundary walls and gate pillars, as is the case with the appeal site.
8. All the above factors contribute to the significance of the OSCA as a whole.
9. Section 6.0 of the Guidelines states that the problems facing the OSCA are related, amongst others, to the unsympathetic alterations that have taken place, which have gradually eroded the areas distinctive character. It continues by emphasising that the importance of the area relates to its completeness as a Victorian suburb, and that to safeguard the latter new development needs to be carefully controlled particularly in the marginal parts of the conservation area.
10. Section 7.0 of the Guidelines continues by stating that the overall aim is to preserve and where appropriate enhance the OSCA. To achieve these aims section 7.0 identifies those elements that are important to the area and the relevant guidelines for assessing new development. Part (1) (i) deals with extensions and states that front extensions will generally be discouraged on older buildings and in general where they would have an adverse visual effect on the existing building or townscape or where they would lead to the loss of original historic features.
11. The appeal proposal would involve the infilling of the existing two storey side recess, effectively squaring off the front elevation to the host property, which is a two storey semi-detached house. The proposed first floor element would include a flat roof and provide additional accommodation in the form of an ensuite bathroom. The ground floor element would not be enclosed and would form an open porch leading to the existing front door. The submitted plans indicate that the new extension would be designed to match existing in terms of its brickwork and quoining.
12. The frontage to the host property is sited close to the back edge of the pavement and as I observed on site, it is, consequently, highly visible from various public vantage points on Stafford Road. The frontage of the host also retains most of its original historic features, including the recessed side extension, front door, upper floor window, quoining, brickwork and hipped roof. These features are repeated on 3 Stafford Road (No.3), which forms the other half of this pair of semis.
13. Within the above context, the proposed extension would be highly visible and prominent within the streetscene. Due to its height, size and flat roofed design

the proposal would result in an incongruous addition to the host property that fails to properly relate to or respect its existing design and distinctive detailing. It would represent an unsympathetic extension to the host property leading to the loss of several original historic features that make an important contribution to the host and wider conservation area. The proposed flat roof would also introduce an awkward juxtaposition with the existing building and hipped roof, giving the impression of an extension that does not harmonise or integrate well with the original building. The result is a development that does not sit comfortably on the existing frontage or within the streetscene. As a result, the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the OSCA.

14. The Appellant has referred to examples of houses in the immediate area which benefit from flat roofed porches, extensions and garages. Whilst I have not been provided with any detailed planning background to these or confirmation as to whether they form part of the original house designs, their existence does not provide justification for a form of development that the Guidelines seeks to resist or as I have found above, a proposal that would harm the character and appearance of the host property and the OSCA. Moreover, as I also confirmed above, the Guidelines were approved with the aim of preventing further decay to the areas unique character and to consolidate and where possible enhance the townscape quality and historic importance of the area that remains.
15. The examples referred to by the Appellant include the flat roofed side extension to No.3, which they contend, as the Council acknowledge in the CDR, has unbalanced this pair of semi-detached properties. However, No.3 still retains a similar two storey side recess with front door, decorative brickwork and quoining, as on the host property and again, as I do not know the full planning circumstances of this extension it is not possible for me to determine whether it is in any way relevant or comparable to the appeal proposal. Even so, I can only consider the proposal that is before me and determine it, as is required, on its individual merits. Neither this example nor the existence of other flat roofed extensions in the area affect, therefore, my findings on this issue.
16. For the reasons set out above, I find that the appeal proposal would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, and as such it would not preserve or enhance the OSCA. In view of this finding and as is required, particularly by the Framework, considerable importance and weight must be attached to the harm to this designated heritage asset. The appeal proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. The level of harm would be high and there are no public benefits delivering either economic or social or environmental objectives which would outweigh that harm.
17. Accordingly, I find that the proposed development would be contrary to policy PCS23 of TPP and paragraphs 189, 197, 199 - 200 and 202 of the Framework.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above and having taken all other matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Roberts

INSPECTOR