
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 May 2022 by A Humphries BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by Martin Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/D/22/3293975

Chester Lodge, 25 and A Half, Wickham Road, London, SE4 1PL

- 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 Karl Hyden against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/21/123963, dated 19 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is for the replacement of arrow-slit gable vent in the street facing elevation with single timber-framed sash window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the replacement of an arrow-slit gable vent in the street facing elevation with single timber-framed sash window at Chester Lodge, 25 and A Half, Wickham Road, London, SE4 1PL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/21/123963, dated 19 October 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 2. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans: Site Location Plan; Existing and Proposed Second Floor Plan (109_3M3_20_1103 Rev 01); Existing and Proposed GA Elevations Proposed Street Elevation (109_3M3_20_2102 Rev 02); and Proposed Sash Window Details (109_3M3_20_1202 Rev 01).
 4. Notwithstanding the detail of the approved plans, details of the meeting rail of the proposed window shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the installation of the new window. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matter

3. I note that there is a degree of variation between the site address given on the application form and that provided on the appeal form. I am satisfied that both are seeking to identify the same site, but the above site address has been taken from the application form, which provides greater clarity and has also been utilised by the Council.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and Brockley Conservation Area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The host dwelling is built of London stock brick with a pitched roof and a gable to the front elevation. An arrow-slit with stone surround, which is visible from the street, sits centrally within the front gable. Below this, paired and single vertical sash windows with stone skewbacks create a uniform appearance to the front elevation. The host dwelling adjoins a modern side annex and Chester House, which is described in the Brockley Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2006) (the Character Appraisal) as a gothic style villa.
6. The host dwelling is located in the Brockley Conservation Area (the Conservation Area). Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) places a duty upon the decision-maker, in the exercise of planning functions, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The National Planning Policy Framework further advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
7. The significance of the area is derived from the distinctive detached villas, short terraces and paired dwellings that exhibit decorative architectural detailing of doors and windows, as noted in the Character Appraisal. This was observed whilst visiting the site, together with a wide variety of architectural styles, including high Victorian eclecticism, Italianate design and some limited modern post-war dwellings. Many of these are characterised by symmetrical fenestrations and regular window hierarchy. This variety contributes to the character of the street scene.
8. The Council has suggested that the arrow-slit contributes to the historic significance of the host dwelling, which was originally built as a coach house. However, there is no evidence presented that supports this contention. In the absence of any other evidence to the contrary, I conclude that the removal of the arrow-slit with stone surround would not result in the loss of a feature of historic significance. I have therefore focused on the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and Conservation Area.
9. In acknowledging the varied architectural styles in the area, I observed the front elevations of the neighbouring dwellings to be characterised by windows of many different types and sizes. Gable windows are also a relatively common feature in the area. An additional window to the front elevation of the host dwelling would not therefore be harmful in the context of the key features and appearance of the area.

10. The host dwelling has a close relationship with the adjoining Chester House, which is characterised by asymmetrical fenestration and a distinctive roofscape with steep pitched gables on the front elevation. Whilst the proposed development would introduce another level to the windows of the host dwelling, the proposed window would be relatively small and would sit below the upper windows and the distinctive roof of Chester House and the Italianate 23 Wickham Road. Furthermore, there would be a degree of separation between the proposed window and the nearest windows of Chester House. As a result, the subordinate appearance of the host dwelling to Chester House would be maintained.
11. The proposed sash window would be timber-framed with a shallow masonry arch and stone screwbacks that would match the window detailing and materials of the host dwelling and some of the windows of Chester House. The placement of the proposed window centrally above paired windows would also mirror some of the fenestration of Chester House. Despite the proposed window being larger than the arrow-slit, the proposed window would sit comfortably within the gable. The proposed window would have similar proportions but be smaller than the existing windows on the front elevation of the host dwelling. This would reflect the window hierarchy prevailing on the street, including Chester House. The proposed window would therefore neither be of a disproportionate size nor unbalance the appearance of the front elevation of the host dwelling and window hierarchy of the street scene.
12. For the reasons above, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not compromise the significance of the Conservation Area. The proposed development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposed development would not conflict with Section 72 of the Act and would comply with Policy 16 of the Core Strategy (2011) and DM Policy 36 of the Development Management Local Plan (2014). These policies seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets and features important to the character and appearance of an area.

Other Matters

13. In the delegated report, the Council suggests that the meeting rail of the proposed window is not the correct depth profile. However, I consider that this matter could be appropriately addressed through a suitable condition, as addressed below.

Conditions

14. In addition to the standard conditions requiring a time limit for commencement of development and adherence to the approved plans, the Council has suggested a condition requiring the use of external materials to match the existing building. In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the host dwelling and Conservation Area, the condition is necessary.
15. The Council has also indicated that the depth profile of the meeting rail of the window would need amending to complement the special character of the area, its buildings, form and materials. On this basis, I also consider this condition to be reasonable and necessary.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be allowed.

A Humphries

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is allowed.

Martin Seaton

INSPECTOR