



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 June 2022

by A Hickey MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E5900/W/21/3280973

Adj 59 Meridian Place, London E14 9FE

- 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 Mukarram Sattar of Meridian Consulting Management Limited against the decision of London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
 - The application Ref PA/21/00677, dated 25 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 21 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is the creation of a new external fire escape to provide egress to an existing infill flat including minor amendments to the internal layout of the flat.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for the proposed creation of a new external fire escape to provide egress to an existing infill flat including minor amendments to the internal layout of the flat at adj 59 Meridian Place, London, E14 9FE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PA/21/00677, dated 25 March 2021, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: MPL_FAR_3_05_370, MPL_FAR_3_05_170, MPL_FAR_3_05_175, MPL_FAR_3_05_270, and MPL_FAR_3_05_020
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match in colour and appearance those used on the external facias of the adjoining infill flat at 59 Meridian Place.

Preliminary Matters

2. At the time of my site visit, a timber enclosed external staircase, was already in place. The staircase at the site does not fully reflect the submitted plans, I have therefore dealt with the scheme as a proposed development.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Meridian Place is a multi-storey u-shaped building, with the rear open courtyard offering views over the South Dock. The building which is set at a higher level than those nearby contains a mix of commercial premises at ground floor with residential accommodation above. The building is served by an undercroft which offers access into the building and a pedestrian route through to the Dock.
5. Except for direct forward and some limited angle views, vistas into and through the undercroft to the appeal site are restricted from public view given the width of the opening entrance, its elevated position and setback from the building line. Additionally, the introduction of the infill flat has created a horizontal emphasis within this space and already disrupts the symmetry of the undercroft.
6. The proposal would be visible within the undercroft area and a small area of the courtyard particularly as there are no similar forms of development. Nevertheless, the 6 columns sitting within the undercroft would still be visible and whilst the introduction of the staircase reduces the space between the columns it does not harm the legibility of how they are read within the setting of the space.
7. However, given the linear nature of the staircase, the split across 2 elevations, it would not result in the proposal appearing overly dominant or incongruous within the immediate setting.
8. While solid clad, aluminium would match the external facia on the infill flat and windows at the building, and as a result it would appear as part of the original development for the flat. Whereas the use of matching brick to the main building would bring about contrast and have a more oppressive, overbearing impact within the undercroft.
9. I have no concerns surrounding the proposed changes to the internal arrangement of the flat that would not be visible from public view and would have no effect on the appearance of the existing building or surrounding area.
10. The proposal would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore meet with the requirements of policies D4, D5 and D8 of the London Plan (2021), S.DH1 and D.DH2 of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan (2020) and the aims of the Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework (2019). These, amongst other things, seek development to be of a high standard of design which respects and positively responds to the areas character and local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

11. No compelling case to the contrary of the Gresham (SMS) Ltd letter regarding means of escape have been provided. Furthermore, in finding no harm to the character and appearance of the existing building or surrounding area there is no requirement on the appellant to demonstrate why the proposal is required for fire safety.
12. Any potential enforcement action around the staircase currently on site and any proposal for the future subdivision of the flat are matters for the Council and do not alter my findings on the main issue

13. Given, the small scale of the development it would not generate a significant amount of noise above what is already a busy public area of the building. Its location adjacent to the existing walls means little useable public space would be lost with access and egress around the staircase principally remaining unchanged. Furthermore, it would not result in a harmful effect through loss of light or outlook given its limited projection and distance from existing windows.

Conditions

14. In addition to the standard time limit, I have imposed a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. This is in the interests of certainty.
15. In order to protect the character and appearance of the area a condition has been suggested to secure matching materials, namely brick, to match Meridian Place. As I have identified above the use of matching materials with the host flat, as has been applied for, will also ensure appropriate design is secured.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

A Hickey

INSPECTOR