



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 November 2022

by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/22/3297754

41B Larkhall Rise, London SW4 6HT

- 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 Justin Vallis against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 21/04688/FUL, dated 3 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is the use of the flat roof as amenity terrace, erect boundary railings and replacement doorway opening to rear elevation at first floor level (retrospective).
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. At the time of my site visit the development had already been carried out. I have determined this appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. Whether the proposal preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Sibella Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is an upper ground floor flat within an end of terrace building which occupies a corner site within the Sibella Road Conservation Area (the SRCA). The significance of the SRCA is partly derived from the architectural quality and coherence of its historic buildings. As identified within the Sibella Road Conservation Area Appraisal, the majority of buildings retain a significant amount of their original features and the area has suffered little from unsympathetic replacement of original windows and doors with PVCu or aluminium alternatives.
5. The SRCA is therefore a fine and well-preserved example of mid-late Victorian speculative development. Given its characteristics and prominence in the street scene, the appeal building makes a positive contribution to the SRCA.
6. The former single leaf doorway to the rear of the flat has been enlarged and a double metal door inserted. The enlargement of the opening has resulted in a loss of the brick arch above, along with an obtrusive disruption to the proportions on the rear elevation.

7. The introduction of the uncharacteristic metal framed door results in a strikingly contemporary appearance which jars markedly with the limited palette of material in the locality. It also appears at odds with the quality detailing of the timber fenestration on the host building, wider terrace and area. Therefore, by virtue of the above factors together, the development is an intrusive addition to the SRCA. Painting the existing door white would fail to overcome this harm.
8. Whilst views of the door from public vantage points are limited and at oblique angles, the alteration would still be somewhat perceptible, particularly in winter months when the trees, which provide much of the screening, may not be in full leaf. Regardless however, it remains that the chosen material and alterations to the opening are harmful in themselves.
9. I acknowledge that the previous PVCu door may have been unsympathetic in terms of its material and appearance. However, its single leaf design would be more in keeping with the proportions of the property. Regardless, this matter does not overcome the harm caused by the also unsympathetic material as currently installed.
10. It has been suggested that there are similar door openings at other properties within the SRCA. It is difficult to ascertain from the photographic evidence as to the material of the examples and I also do not know the full circumstances under which they have been installed or granted planning permission. Moreover, timber remains the predominant fenestration material. Whilst I note the use of aluminium framed doors to the property below, this is a modern addition at a lower level where some flexibility in materials may be appropriate, whereas the appeal proposal concerns the main part of the historic building and at a raised level.
11. Taking all the above into consideration, and given the scale of the development in context, the proposal causes less than substantial harm to the significance of the SRCA as a whole. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, irrespective of the level of harm and, where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. The appellant suggests that the previous PVCu door was leaking thus the metal replacement has ensured the flat is watertight. It is also suggested that the door as installed is more energy efficient and increases light to the living space. However, based on the evidence before me, I am not convinced that the replacement door would be the only way in which the appeal property could be maintained or living conditions improved. Moreover, I do not consider these matters to amount to public benefits. I therefore afford limited weight to these matters.
13. Accordingly, the development fails to preserve the character or appearance of the SRCA. It therefore conflicts with policies Q5, Q11 and Q22 of the Lambeth Local Plan 2020-2035 (September 2021) which collectively seek to ensure that developments positively respond to the building and their context and preserve the character or appearance of conservation areas. It also conflicts with the guidance in the Building Alterations & Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (September 2015) and the Framework. The lack of objections from third parties does not alter my findings above.

Conclusion

14. The development conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

H Ellison

INSPECTOR