



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 October 2023

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/22/3297926

70 and 72 Strathbrook Road, London SW16 3AZ

- 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 Messrs Leach and Hardy against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 21/03798/FUL, dated 28 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of rear and side dormer windows on both properties.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the appeal form, although I have omitted the site address; I have used this in preference to the wording given on the planning application form as, although it is the same in substance, it provides a more concise description of the proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Streatham Lodge Estate Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to Nos 70 and 72 Strathbrook Road, a connected pair of two-storey dwellings with a symmetrical hipped roof form. They sit within a larger group of similar dwellings, connected at first-floor level, extending along the eastern side of Strathbrook Road from No 2 to No 82. The appellant describes them as "dating back to the 1920s-30s/late Georgian/inter war period", although based on their style and appearance I would consider the Council's assessment that they are early 20th century Edwardian to be more accurate. The group as a whole is characterised by its arts and crafts detailing, including hipped clay tiled roofs, single storey entrance bays with hipped roofs, wide multi casement windows, and tall chimneys to the front of the property.
5. The appeal properties, and indeed all of the housing on Strathbrook Road, are within the Streatham Lodge Estate Conservation Area ("the CA"). I therefore have a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving

or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, the Framework states that they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (paragraph 189). It goes on to advise that any harm or loss requires clear and convincing justification (paragraph 200) and that any harm that is less than substantial must be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal (paragraph 202).

6. The CA is characterised by its early 20th century housing, including Edwardian dwellings such as the appeal properties but also including later inter-war development. It was developed on the site of the large house known as Streatham Lodge and its extensive grounds. In my view the significance of the CA derives, at least in part, from the architectural richness of the area and the general quality of the buildings and streets. The appeal properties and the wider group of which they are part on Strathbrook Road make a particular contribution to the quality of the CA through the broad consistency of their appearance, including such details as their tall decorative chimney stacks and their hipped roofs.
7. The proposed alterations would be mirrored on the two appeal properties. The side dormers would have hipped roofs, which would be set slightly below the main roof ridge. Although the appellants state that there would be a lateral gap of 0.15m between the end of the side dormer and the main chimney stack, when seen from most viewpoints along Strathbrook Road the dormers would form the backdrop to both the main chimneys and the smaller, though equally prominent and decorative, front chimneys. They would therefore diminish the positive contribution which the chimney stacks make to the quality of the CA. The side dormers would also intrude into the spaciousness which the hipped side roofs give to the streetscene; again, in my view this would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the CA.
8. I acknowledge that there are already a number of properties elsewhere on Strathbrook Road, including those to which the appellant drew my attention, where side dormers have been added, or where hipped roofs have been converted to side gables. However, based on the evidence before me (including my observations on my site visit) these amount to no more than a quarter of the group between No 2 and No 82 (evens only), and they therefore form a limited – rather than prevalent – characteristic in the streetscene. On the limited information before me, it appears that these alterations to the front and side roof pitches pre-date the designation of the CA; given that they have all (to varying extents) diminished the contribution which the fine chimney stacks and space created by hipped roofs make to the quality of the area, they do not provide a sound basis for allowing the appeal proposal given the harm I have identified.
9. The appellants also particularly drew my attention to a recent grant of planning permission for side and rear dormers at No 104 Strathbrook Road¹. However, that property is rather later than the appeal properties, appearing to fall firmly into the 1920s to '30s period. In common with other dwellings from that era within the CA No 104 does not have the prominent chimney stacks that, in the case of earlier development including the appeal properties, make such a positive contribution to character and appearance of the CA. The factors which the Council would have taken into account in permitting that scheme would

¹ LPA Ref: 21/00733/FUL

therefore not have been the same as in this case; again, it therefore does not carry significant weight in favour of the appeal proposals.

10. The appellants also drew my attention to an earlier appeal decision in respect of No 70 (PINS Ref: APP/N5660/D/19/3243452), and argued that "the previous Inspector was seriously misled as to the built heritage/conservation value of the dwelling" on the grounds that there is "serious ambiguity" as to "the conservation value of the entire CA". In fact, although the appellants' final comments stated that "it was never the intention to 'appeal the conservation area designation'", much of the appeal statement (including paragraph 3.3.5 and most of the content from 4.2.2 to 4.2.29 inclusive) was devoted to questioning whether or not the statutory protection of conservation area status is merited. This is not a matter for me to consider in determining this appeal; the CA is a designated heritage asset, the significance of which in respect of this appeal I have identified above.
11. For the reasons I have set out above, I conclude that the proposed side dormers would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Streatham Lodge Estate Conservation Area. In the Framework's terms, the harm to the significance of the CA as a designated heritage asset arising from the proposal would be less than substantial.
12. The appellants have suggested that there are public benefits in maintaining the appeal properties as modern and contemporary dwellings in viable ongoing use as for single family occupation in the face of concern about a proliferation of flat and HMO conversions. It is also suggested that the scheme would enhance energy efficiency through improved insulation and thermal efficiency. There is nothing before me to suggest that these matters would be dependent on the appeal scheme going ahead but, in any event, such public benefits as might arise would be relatively limited, and therefore carry only modest weight in favour of the scheme. They would not outweigh the harm to the heritage asset, to which I must attribute great weight.
13. The proposal conflicts with Policies Q5, Q11 and Q22 of the 2021 Lambeth Local Plan; together (and among other things) these policies seek to sustain and reinforce local distinctiveness, ensure that alterations respond to original architecture and roof forms, and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas. For the same reasons I find conflict with the provisions of the Framework in respect of protecting the historic environment.

Conclusion

14. The proposed development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Streatham Lodge Estate Conservation Area, and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations, including those of the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
15. For the reasons given above, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector