



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2023

by M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/22/3303504

203C Castelnau, Barnes, Richmond upon Thames, London SW13 9EA

- 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 Louisa Barnett against the decision of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.
 - The application Ref 22/1533/FUL, dated 13 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 1 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'replace 3No. existing roof lights at roof level with a single large dormer with double sash windows to the south/side elevation. To further allow natural light to ingress into level 02, 2No. glass, aluminium framed roof light to be installed on the new dormer flat roof, situated above the staircase and new en-suite. A further 1No. glass, aluminium framed roof light is to be installed on the existing pitched roof to provide natural light to the stair landing.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter and Main Issue

2. The proposed development includes the installation of rooflights within sections of the existing roof slopes. The Council has raised no objection to these alterations. Based on all that I have seen and read, I see no reason to disagree with this point of view. The main issue of the appeal is therefore whether the proposed dormer window would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Castelnau Conservation Area (CA), having particular regard to the effect on the significance of a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM).

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a semi-detached property, subdivided into a number of residential units and located within the Castelnau CA. In accordance with the duty imposed by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
4. The CA is characterised and derives its significance from its Victorian and Edwardian architecture arising from the planned growth of the area from the mid-19th century. It has a high density of superior quality historic buildings, typically but not limited to, 3 storeys high. Buildings are predominantly semi-detached or terraced, set behind front gardens often demarcated by low walls and railings. Projecting eaves, bay windows and 2 or 4 pane sash windows are typical architectural details, although there is some variety of overall styles

- between buildings. Trees within the street and front gardens contribute to the pleasant, verdant character of the area.
5. The contribution of the appeal site is one such semi-detached property that mirrors the architectural style of an adjacent pair of semi-detached properties. It faces onto Castelnau, forming part of the visual approach to the nearby listed Hammersmith Bridge, with the side elevation adjoining Glenthams Road.
 6. Both parties agree that the appeal building is a locally listed BTM. Its significance is mainly derived from its age and aesthetic value as a 19th century building located within a historical area. The appeal building has a striking and somewhat commanding presence along with the adjoining symmetrical semi-detached property. This is due in part to its proximity to the road, the ground floor door being located above ground level accessed via external stairs, and the low level boundary wall to the front of the plot. A projecting bay exists on the front elevation terminating under the upper floor windows. Combined with the robust and distinctive overhanging eaves, these features emphasise the scale and presence of the host building. In contrast, the roof is predominantly a shallow hipped form, with a flat roof projection to the side. The scale of the building therefore diminishes significantly at roof level.
 7. The proposal would add a flat roofed box dormer along the majority of the side facing hipped roof slope significantly increasing the complexity, scale and bulk of the roof. The windows within the proposed dormer try to replicate those found elsewhere within the host property. Whilst marginally smaller, they are not significantly so. Furthermore, the pairing of sash windows would result in a low wall to window ratio in the dormer, contrasting with the high wall to window ratio of the side elevation that it would sit above. The overall design and scale of the dormer does not therefore reflect the diminishing scale of the host building at roof level. It would therefore result in an incongruous form of development that would detract from and be harmful to, the architectural significance of the BTM.
 8. Notwithstanding the appellant's visibility study, I observed that whilst set down from the ridge and set back behind the flat roof section, the form and design of the dormer would nonetheless be dominant and conspicuous from within Castelnau, particularly due to the gap formed by Glenthams Road. It would also be visible in more distant views along Glenthams Road, for example at the corner of Glenthams Gardens. Whilst constructed in matching materials this would not overcome the harm arising from the position, form and design of the proposal.
 9. I saw that 209 Castelnau is located at the opposite end of the group of similarly designed semi-detached properties, and features a side facing dormer extension, similar in design to that proposed. The evidence before me indicates that this development was approved prior to the adoption of the Richmond upon Thames Local Plan 2018 (RUTLP), the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) and the House Extensions and External Alterations SPD (2015) and it was therefore, permitted under a different planning policy context to that which now exists. Furthermore, the existing dormer window to No 209 does not appear to necessarily constitute an example of sympathetic development, given that the large scale of the dormer dominates the side facing roof slope of the property. The presence of unsympathetic development

nearby does not justify permitting new development that fails to take account of the specific context of the appeal site.

10. The importance of symmetry between semi-detached buildings is highlighted within the SPD, along with the need to ensure that roof extensions do not dominate the roof slope. The host building is highly symmetrical with its attached neighbour. I accept that the proposal would introduce a degree of symmetry when the 2 pairs of semi-detached properties are viewed together. Nonetheless, it would unbalance the individual pair of semi-detached properties that the appeal site belongs to, a matter which the SPD seeks to avoid.
11. For the reasons set out above, the development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, and it would be harmful to the significance of a BTM. Therefore, the development would be in conflict with Policies LP1, LP3 and LP4 of the RUTLP. In combination and amongst other things, these policies require that development is of a high architectural and design quality that preserves and where possible, enhances the character or appearance of CA's and the significance and character of BTM's, an objective shared with the Building of Townscape Merit SPD. There would also be conflict with the SPD which seeks to ensure that roof extensions including their windows, are in scale with the existing structure. Conflict would also arise with the statutory test and paragraph 197 of the Framework, which indicates that development should sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, and make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
12. The Council refers to the Castelnau Conservation Area Statement 25 and the Castelnau Conservation Area Study. Generally, these are statements of character rather than specific policy advice or guidelines in respect of new development within the CA. I have not therefore concluded against these documents.
13. I recognise that the impact of the proposal on the CA would be localised, given it would be seen in relatively close views from Castelnau and to a lesser extent Glenthams Road. In the words of the Framework, the harm to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial, but nevertheless important given the negative effect on the appearance of the CA. The harm to the significance of the BTM would be modest. Paragraph 202 of the Framework therefore directs me to weigh the identified harm against the public benefits of the proposal.

Heritage Balance

14. The development would result in a modest increase in accommodation at the host property along with the relocation and widening of a narrow staircase. Whilst this would be of obvious benefit to the appellant, it would be a private rather than public benefit. No further public benefits of the scheme have been advanced.
15. Consequently, when giving considerable importance and weight to the special regard I must have to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA and the significance of the BTM, I find that the significant harm that would arise from the appeal scheme, would not be outweighed by any public benefits.

Other Matters

16. Reference is made to the development incorporating sustainable techniques to reduce CO₂ emissions such as efficient insulation to the walls, floor and roof and low emissivity coated glass. Whilst such measures are commendable, there is no evidence before me to confirm that these measures would be in excess of the Building Regulations requirements. The appellant further suggests that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the living conditions of neighbouring residents or existing trees. Be that as it may, these matters are neutral factors that weigh neither for, nor against the proposal.
17. I note that the proposal has evolved since the refusal of a previous scheme (application reference 14/3606/FUL), it did not attract objections during the consultation period of the application and support was received from neighbouring residents. However, the matters raised do not alter my findings on the main issue, with which I have found harm with this proposal for the foregoing reasons. Concerns over how the Council dealt with and determined the planning application are acknowledged but are nonetheless, a matter for the main parties.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, the development would conflict with the aims of the development plan and the Framework read as a whole. There are no considerations advanced that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan or the Framework. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

M Clowes

INSPECTOR