



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 April 2023

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/22/3304488

First Floor, 23 Chelsham Road, London SW4 6NR

- 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 Neil Mayfield against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 22/00515/FUL, dated 13 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is 'replacement of 5 single-glazed windows with modern, energy-efficient and secure double glazed windows. Two windows at front of building and three windows at rear'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Sibella Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The Sibella Road Conservation Area ('the CA') is generally characterised by generous mid-19th century dwellings on fairly uniform plots. I consider that the significance of the CA derives in part from the distinctive coherent quality of the area which is reinforced by the architectural detailing and retained original features and materials to many of the buildings within it. Indeed, the Sibella Road Conservation Area Appraisal identifies that this area has suffered little from the unsympathetic replacement of original windows and doors with PVCu or aluminium alternatives.
4. The appeal development proposes to replace timber top hung sliding sash windows to the first-floor flat on the site with UPVC windows, and has already been carried out. The appeal building is part of a well-preserved terrace of three-storey buildings which otherwise retain top hung timber sash windows of consistent proportions and designs. There is a particularly strong sense of uniformity to the frontage of the group, and I find that the terrace makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance and thus significance of the CA.
5. The outward opening casement style of the replacement windows does not reflect the sliding sash windows that are typical of the area, and would lead to the casements projecting conspicuously beyond the face of the window at times when they are open. Their frames and joinery are also much thicker, and the

visible trickle vents and shiny finish give the windows a clearly artificial appearance which sits awkwardly against the traditional materials and characteristic timber windows of the host building, terrace and wider locality. In my assessment, the windows appear wholly unsympathetic to the appeal building.

6. The windows to the front of the building are readily apparent from Chelsham Road where they stand out as discordant and incongruous features that harmfully erode the uniformity of the terrace group. The appellant has drawn my attention to extensions and alterations approved to some other buildings on Chelsham Road. However, while I appreciate that there is less uniformity to the rear of buildings nearby, I have not been directed to any examples of UPVC windows to openings within the original fabric of the buildings. In this context, I consider that the windows to the rear elevation and to the side of the rear outrigger would also be appreciated as uncharacteristic features detrimental to the composition and integrity of the host building and terrace. There may be no public views of the windows to the rear of the building limiting the contribution that they make to the significance of the CA, but there would be views from neighbouring properties and gardens. These views do make some modest contribution to the significance of the CA, and this contribution would be diminished by the proposal.
7. For these reasons, I find that the development detracts from the character and appearance of the host building and terrace, causing harm to the character and the appearance of the CA. Given the nature of the proposal and the relatively localised visual impact, I find that the harm to the significance of the CA is less than substantial in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework'). The Framework therefore indicates that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
8. The appellant refers to the environmental benefits of improved insulation and thermal performance of the replacement windows in comparison to timber, and suggests that this would also contribute to the affordability of the dwelling which is currently a rental property. In these regards, the proposal would accord with objectives in the Lambeth Local Plan 2020-2035 (adopted 2021) ('the LP'). However, the small scale of the development means that I consider such benefits are likely to be limited in extent. Moreover, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that these benefits could not also have been achieved with secondary glazing or sympathetic replacement windows in keeping with the appearance, detailing and opening type of the originals; nor that installation or maintenance costs of doing so would make the dwelling unaffordable to any potential occupiers. These factors limit the weight that I afford to these matters. In my judgement, the public benefits of the proposal are insufficient to outweigh the harm that the development causes to heritage assets, a matter that I give considerable importance and weight in accordance with the Framework.
9. I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA in accordance with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. For the reasons above, I conclude that the proposal causes unacceptable harm to the character and the appearance of the Sibella Road CA, and it conflicts with Policies Q5, Q11 and Q22 of the LP. Amongst other things, these policies require that alterations to buildings respond positively to original architecture and

fenestration, and seek development that sustains and reinforces local distinctiveness and that preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Conclusion

10. I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR