
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 April 2023

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/D/23/3314475

11 Lessingham Avenue, London SW17 8LZ

- 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 Saxton against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application ref. 2022/3358, dated 10 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is for erection of rear dormer roof extension with associated alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council refers to policies of the Wandsworth Publication Version Local Plan. This is currently at the examination stage and has not yet been adopted by the Council as part of its development plan. Accordingly, I can only give such policies limited weight in the decision-making process.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounds, including the Totterdown Fields Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site relates to a mid-terrace property sited on Lessingham Avenue. The street scene to the south east is predominantly residential in nature, with Tooting High Street and its associated commercial and community premises in the opposite direction. The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the roof to create habitable attic accommodation.
 5. Being situated in the CA, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, as required by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that when considering the impact of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
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6. The special architectural and historic interest of the CA derives from properties influenced by the Garden City and Arts & Crafts movement. Although there is some variety in details, the character of the area is established by similar patterns and materials throughout the estate, a feature that positively contributes to the townscape of the area. The area's period quality is further enhanced by its picturesque, grid-pattern street layout.
7. I saw at my site visit that there are a variety of roof shapes on buildings in the vicinity, of differing size, design and detailing. Within this context, to my mind the principle of adding volume to the appeal dwelling at roof level could be acceptable and need not appear incongruous.
8. However, I consider that the creation of the mansard extension would not be an appropriate solution, resulting in an element that would dominate the roof of the property. It would be clearly visible from the rear habitable windows and private amenity spaces of surrounding houses, having a detrimental impact by virtue of its scale and extent. The scheme would lack subservience to the new ridge line, and there would be no separation from the party walls to either side. The incongruous and bulky appearance would be exacerbated by the use of metallic seam panels that would fail to integrate with the more traditional external materials on other properties in the terrace.
9. I appreciate that the proposal would have a limited effect on the public domain and the wider CA due to a lack of visibility. However, as I have noted above, the scheme would still be evident from the curtilages of other properties in the locale. In any event, just because a proposal cannot readily be viewed from the public domain or the wider CA does not obviate the obligation to ensure that it would be well designed, uses appropriate materials and is not so large that it dominates and competes with the original building.
10. I acknowledge that the site is not statutory or locally listed, that the development that will provide additional living space for the appellant's growing family and that there are no objections in respect of the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring residences. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
11. I also observed the substantial school building that lies in close proximity to the appeal site on Tooting High Street; nevertheless the presence of this building is a neutral consideration in any balance against planning harm, and I am mindful that each case must be assessed on its own merits.
12. I therefore conclude that whilst the proposal would have a neutral impact on the setting and significance of the CA as a whole, it would nevertheless materially harm the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounds, having particular regard to this part of Lessingham Avenue. Consequently, the proposal would fail policies DMS1 and DMH5 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Development Management Policies Document (March 2016), the Council's Housing Supplementary Planning Document (November 2016) and the provisions of The Totterdown Fields Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy. Collectively these seek to ensure development is of an acceptable scale and design.

Conclusion

13. Having regard to the above and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Hall

INSPECTOR