



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 April 2023

by J Wellstead BA(Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/D/22/3305673

136 Sutherland Grove, Wandsworth, London SW18 5QN

- 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 Anoop Sharma against the decision of London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2022/1655, dated 20 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 13 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is alterations including erection of a roof extension and extension to main rear roof (with French doors and safety railing); Demolition of existing garage and erection of a two-storey side extension and single-storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host property and the Sutherland Grove Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a two-storey, semi-detached dwelling with hipped roof and single-storey garage and is located within the Sutherland Grove Conservation Area (CA). It is set within a row of similar, paired semi-detached houses on the east side of Sutherland Grove Road. Gaps between the pairs of houses provide glimpses of space and trees beyond which contribute to the spacious suburban character of the area. There is a moderately consistent and visually pleasing pattern of development in the immediate vicinity. The built form is in general symmetry and is of a positive roofscape pattern, however, there is some variety due to extensions in the area.
4. I have had regard to the statutory duty imposed by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework'). The Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. The Framework states that when considering the impact of new development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
5. The significance of the CA lies, in part, in the homely domestic 1920s-30s suburban housing with generous front gardens in a dramatic hilly streetscape.

The symmetry between pairs of semi-detached dwellings in this part of the street scene contributes positively to the CA.

6. The appeal site's paired neighbour, 134 Sutherland Grove (No.134), has a two-storey flat-roof side extension which has reduced the symmetry and balance between the two properties somewhat. Nonetheless, although the appeal site is not identified in the Sutherland Grove Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Strategy 2007 as a listed or locally listed building, it contributes positively to the character and appearance of the section of the street scene within which it is located due to the hipped roof form. The appeal scheme's two-storey side extension would be topped with a hipped pitched roof which would further harm/erode the symmetry between the appeal site and No.134.
7. Although the front plane of the roof is inset slightly from the main ridgeline, the difference is minimal and, combined with the width of the scheme roof would extend across the full width of the site at the rear, with no set back which would result in an addition that would fail to be subservient to the host building and which would further erode the symmetry of the pair of dwellings. While the scheme would be built to the side and rear of the dwelling, much of the extension would be visible from the front elevation and would dominate and compete with the host dwelling in terms of bulk and scale.
8. The appeal scheme would also reduce the gap between the appeal site and No.138. This would increase the scale and mass of built form facing onto the public realm, creating a harmful effect on the spacious suburban character of the area and gaps which currently allow views between pairs of properties.
9. The extensions at No. 68 and No. 156 Sutherland Grove are set in a part of the road with more variation between building designs, including more prominent extensions and alterations, so have a different context and are materially different to the appeal scheme. Other examples of extensions at nearby properties are different because they have predominantly retained their hipped roofline and symmetry in pairs. The appellant highlights that 140 Sutherland Grove (No.140) has a two-storey side extension, and permission was recently approved for a similar scheme at the adjoining dwelling, 138 Sutherland Grove (No.138). However, the scheme at No.138 more closely mirrors the extension at No.140, helping to retain the sense of balance. In contrast, the appeal scheme would fail to balance or harmonise with the extension at the adjoining dwelling due to its different roof form. This would appear discordant in the setting.
10. The council does not object to the single-story rear extension. Nevertheless, I have a statutory duty to consider whether all aspects of the development preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. The single storey rear extension would not be visible from the public realm, nor would it extend the built form beyond the established rear building line. This element of the scheme would therefore have a neutral effect on the CA.
11. Accordingly, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, resulting in less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset. Paragraph 202 of the Framework indicates that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

12. Whilst the appellant has suggested that the scheme would improve the tired facade of the host dwelling, there is nothing to suggest that this matter could not be addressed by means other than the proposal. I also understand that the proposal would improve the lives of the owners of the property through the provision of additional family living space. Even if I were to consider additional family space a public benefit, this does not outweigh the harm identified above. There is also nothing to indicate that this aim could not also be achieved through an alternative design. Therefore, I attach very limited weight to any such public benefits.
13. The issues described above relating to the two-storey side and rear roof extension with dormer could not be overcome with a condition, given the nature of the harm identified above.
14. The constraints of the site and the retention of sufficient garden space do not alter my conclusions.
15. Nevertheless, the development overall would harm the character and appearance of the host property and the CA. It therefore conflicts with Policies DMS1, DMS2 and DMH5 of the Wandsworth Local Plan Development Management Policies Document (2016), the Wandsworth Local Plan Supplementary Planning Document Housing (2016), the statutory duty of Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy HC1 of The London Plan, The spatial development strategy for Greater London (2021) and paragraph 199-202 of the Framework. These documents and policies seek to ensure - amongst other things - that extensions and alterations to existing dwellings are of a high design quality which is sympathetic to the existing dwelling while protecting and enhancing the CA.

Other Matters

16. I note the appellant's comments with regards to the fairness and consistency of the council's approach to approving or refusing permission in the area. The conduct of the council does not affect my findings on the main issue.
17. The appellant contends that the proposal represents sustainable development and is therefore compliant with the Framework. However, while the Framework has a presumption towards sustainable development, this is not without good and appropriate design.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given, the development fails to accord with the relevant policies of the development plan and the Framework. There are no material considerations in this case which indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Wellstead

INSPECTOR