



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 August 2023

by J Somers BSocSci (Planning) MA (HEC) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31st August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/D/23/3324377

19 Parkfields, Wandsworth SW15 6NH

- 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 & D Smith & Weiss against the decision of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref 2023/0624, dated 15 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 16 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as the demolition of the existing modern rear extension and conservatory and erection of a part single, part two storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. It is noted that the Reasons for Refusal in from the Council's Decision Notice cited Policies DMS1, DMS2 and DMS8 of the Wandsworth Development Management Policies 2016 (DMPD); and Policy IS3 of the Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2016 (CS). During the appeal process, the Wandsworth Local Plan (LP) has been examined, and has been adopted by the Council on 19 July 2023 which supersedes the policies of the DMPD and the CS. The reasons for refusal also state the 'publication version' policies of the Local Plan, which are now fully adopted and carry full weight. I have therefore only referred to the adopted policies of the LP in this decision.
3. The description of proposed development includes a number of elements which have already achieved planning consent¹ and upon my site visit would appear to be currently being constructed. The main difference from the approval to this application is the first floor component of the proposal which changes the roof form and widens the first floor rear component and adds additional extensions to the first floor above what was previously approved. As this is the main contention between both parties, I will concern myself with this matter only.

Main Issue

4. Taking the above into account, the main issue is the effect of the proposed first floor rear extensions upon the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding locality, with special attention and regard to the Parkfields Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

¹ Planning App Ref: 2022/3202

5. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (PLBCA), in respect of development affecting CAs, states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and/or appearance of the area.
6. The CA is separated into two district sub-areas with the appeal site located within the Parkfields Sub-Area. This area contains a small group of early to mid eighteenth century villas that front the narrow laneway of Parkfields and are also considered to be locally listed, or non-designated heritage assets in line with Paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Given the enclosed feeling of Parkfields, the area has a tranquil and leafy character where contributions are made from the street trees, well planted front gardens and mature trees to the rear gardens; tops of trees which can be experienced through some of the remaining visual gaps between dwellings.
7. Originally, the dwellings formed groups of small semi-detached dwellings with larger gaps between each of the dwellings. Original forms consist of Regency inspired design with London stock brick, two storeys, multi-paned windows, hipped roof forms with large coaxial chimney stacks with dwellings having a rather modest footprint. To the rear the pairs of dwellings appear to also have rear wings which are deliberately subservient to the main dwelling. These elements, amongst others form part of the qualities that make up the local character and distinctiveness of the locality. Whilst the original forms of the dwellings are evident, over the years large side extensions have been erected to many of the dwellings which have removed many of the spaces between the dwellings and give a more built up and terraced form to Parkfields. The extensions present a negative aspect to the significance of the buildings and the locality. A number of issues are identified within the appraisal that threaten the character of the CA such as side extensions, alterations to rooves, rendering, alterations to windows and trees.
8. The appeal site appears to have been one of the characteristic semi-detached dwellings which illustrate some of the positive characteristics of the CA. The building retains its original roof form, coaxial chimney stacks and authentic windows. To the rear, the appeal site shares a gabled rear extension with No.17, which appears to be later in date than the dwelling, but is authentic in terms of its subservience to the main dwelling and form with each pair sharing half of the rear wing. Whilst there have been a large amount of extensions to the dwelling (side extension, ground floor rear); the original form of the dwelling to the rear is still decipherable, particularly at first floor level.
9. Whilst I acknowledge comments from the appellant's Statement of Case (SoC) that the side infill extensions in-effect makes the appeal site a terrace, the form and appearance of the pairs of semi-detached dwellings and roof forms do allow the historic semi-detached forms to dominate and many of the remaining features are architecturally authentic and integral to their historic origins as semi-detached properties. Whilst one could view the properties as either semi-detached or terraced, it does not change how extensions and alterations are assessed in terms of the characteristics and proportions of the existing dwellings, and the need for alterations to respond to the character and proportions of the building and the surrounding context.

10. In undertaking extensions and alterations to the roof of an existing dwelling, the Wandsworth LP Policy LP1 sets a number of design principles such as ensuring a design-led approach where new development ensures a high level of physical integration with their surroundings; ensure that scale and massing contributes to local spatial character, does not harm the amenity of occupiers and users; and is sympathetic to local characteristics, amongst others. LP Policy LP3 is related to the historic environment and seeks that proposals sustain, preserve and wherever possible, enhance the significance, appearance, character, function and setting of heritage assets. Policy LP5 applies specifically to residential extensions and seeks that development respects and/or complements the form, setting, period and detailing of the host building, is in keeping with the character of the locality and the style of the existing building, amongst others. The design policies are supplemented by the Wandsworth Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which provides further guidance with regards to roof extensions such as roofs being an important feature of the urban scene and ensuring the extension is proportionate to the roof, with emphasis on preserving original features such as the pitch and chimneys of the roof.
11. The proposal would remove the pitched roof of the existing rear wing, elongate the ridge and width of the first floor rear wing so that it would give an appearance of encapsulating the original rear facade of the dwelling at first floor level. The rear wing would no longer appear as a subservient rear addition that matched the neighbouring rear wing extension. Whilst I can appreciate design attempts such as setting back some of the first floor behind a pitched projecting section to reduce visual bulk, this is unconvincing and gives an enlarged asymmetrical appearance when compared to the neighbouring first floor rear wing of the neighbouring dwelling. The first floor rear extension does not reflect the small proportions of the existing dwelling and the roof which is detrimental to the building's architectural integrity and authenticity, and which is also noted with roof alterations specifically threatening the character of the CA. The proposed scheme would have an awkward appearance and be detrimental to the positive qualities that inform the local character and distinctiveness of this particular locality.
12. I note comments in the appellants Statement of Case (SoC) that the CA appraisal is predominantly concerned with the front facades of buildings along Parkfields. However, it should not be assumed that the CA Appraisal speaks of every element of significance, or that because something is not mentioned, that it is not significant. The duty provided under s72 of the PLBCA does not make any differentiation between whether the development is within the public or private realm, and an assessment of harm is not limited to front facades or tangible aspects such as views and should also incorporate intangible aspects. As such it is not appropriate to discount the contribution to the significance of the rear of the buildings to the CA, which as described contribute to the significance of the CA, the status, and architectural authenticity, hierarchy and integrity of the existing building.
13. Taking the above into account, the proposed scheme would be contrary to LP Policies LP1, LP3 and LP4 as detailed previously. Consequently, and although serious, the proposed scheme would cause 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the CA within the meaning of the term in paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 200 of the Framework states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated

heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires that, where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. I have also applied Paragraph 203 of the Framework which seeks to consider harm to non-designated heritage assets.

14. The appellant has not outlined any public benefits of the scheme, however there would be public benefits such as the short term economic benefits arising from employment from the construction of such an extension. However these benefits would be present in alternative schemes which may be more appropriate to development plan policies. That said, these benefits would not justify the harm I have identified.
15. I therefore find that the public benefits would not outweigh the harm caused to the significance of the CA. The scheme therefore conflicts with the Framework, which directs, at paragraph 199, 'that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation ... irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to their significance'.
16. In conclusion on this matter, I consider the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA. It has not been shown that public benefits would outweigh this harm and so the proposal would conflict with the development plan, the Framework and my duty under the PLBCA.

Other Matters

17. It is noted that the Council's Reason for Refusal that LP Policy LP2 is utilised as a reason for refusal. This policy is related to general principles which appear to be more related with living conditions, such as noise, contamination, overlooking, amongst others. This policy is not considered to be relevant to this matter concerning character and appearance.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

J Somers

INSPECTOR