
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2023

by Helen O'Connor LLB MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/D/22/3308468

131 Park Road, Teddington, Richmond Upon Thames TW11 OBS

- 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 and Mrs Sorrell against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames.
 - The application Ref 22/1384/HOT, dated 29 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 21 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is to replace a 1970's extension to the front of the property with an entrance lobby to enable the use of existing front room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated on 5 September 2023 and after the submission of the appeal. The historic environment policies have remained unchanged within the new version of the Framework, which is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of 131 Park Road, including its significance as a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM).

Reasons

4. 131 Park Road is a BTM, which the Council's Buildings of Townscape Merit Supplementary Planning Document, May 2015 describes as a building of local interest of significance to the history and character of the environment. As such, it is a building that has been identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions owing to its heritage interest. Therefore, it constitutes a non-designated heritage asset for the purposes of the Framework.
5. The appeal building probably dates from the 19th century and is a detached two storey dwelling that was originally the gatehouse to a larger dwelling known as Bushy Lodge¹. The building is architecturally distinctive and includes unusual features such as a pyramidal tower, a bell tower and tall chimneys. The composition of the gables on the southern and eastern elevations provides

¹ 1880 OS map extract, Figure 17, Appellants' Heritage Statement dated April 2022

particular interest as their proportions match, and they are positioned in the most publicly visible portion of the building from Park Road. They both feature attractive pairs of narrow arched, decoratively leaded windows at first floor level.

6. In addition, the main entrance door with semi-circular fanlight in the eastern elevation is flanked by two more narrow leaded windows. The arched motif with central key stone is continued over the main entranceway. This configuration gives this part of the building pleasing proportions and legibility by signalling the main entrance point and would originally have faced towards the driveway to Bushy Lodge.
7. The surrounding context has since changed, and the appeal building sits within a series of dwellings that front onto Park Road. No. 131 itself has undergone alterations and extensions, particularly to the sides and rear parts of the building. Nevertheless, no. 131 sits forward of its neighbours, and is obviously of an older origin and aesthetically distinctive compared to the closest dwellings to the east.
8. The significance of the appeal building as a BTM, is chiefly derived from its architectural interest and surviving historic fabric. It derives further significance owing to its direct connection with the historic land use of this part of the borough.
9. The proposals would remove a late 20th century bay window insertion from the eastern elevation and replace it with a single storey extension that would create a new entrance point. This would involve repositioning the existing front door deeper into the plot and within the extension, such that it would face southwards towards Park Road. The existing doorway would have a glazed infill.
10. The proposed rearrangement of the main door position would be particularly harmful to an important architectural component of the building's significance as a heritage asset. The proposed glazed infill of the original doorway would be visually and functionally discordant with the remaining original fenestration and architectural detailing within the eastern elevation, which combine to announce the position of the main entrance. As a result, the architectural integrity of a key part of the building would be weakened.
11. Furthermore, the proposed entrance hallway extension when viewed from the front, would be overly wide and would have an odd asymmetrical pitched roof relative to the principal gable. The arch and keystone ornamentation over the door would appear cramped within the apex of the structure. In addition, the position of the doorway would be to one side leaving an unbalanced solid to void ratio in the frontage of the extension.
12. Therefore, despite the extension taking some cues from the materials and angle of roof pitch found elsewhere on the building, it would ultimately appear harmfully discordant.
13. Notwithstanding the proximity of other nearby dwellings, the adverse effects identified would be visible from Park Road which would exacerbate the degree of harm.
14. There is no dispute between the parties that the removal of the modern uncharacteristic wide bay window would be beneficial. I concur. However, it

does not automatically follow that a replacement structure would represent an enhancement. Overall, for the reasons outlined, I cannot agree with the appellants' assertion that the proposals would be beneficial to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

15. Paragraph 203 of the Framework confirms that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account. It states that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
16. The scale of the proposed development is minor. However, it would affect a heritage asset that has cumulatively already experienced notable extension and adaptation, as well as changes to its context. Paragraph 189 of the Framework reminds us that heritage assets, including those of local historic value, are an irreplaceable resource. Moreover, paragraph 130 of the Framework stipulates, amongst other things, that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history. Despite its scale, the proposal would markedly undermine the significance of the building and would thereby dilute its valuable contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
17. I acknowledge that the proposal represents an investment into the fabric of the building that would provide a rationalised internal layout preferable to the appellants. However, there is little evidence to demonstrate that it is presently unusable as a family home as is asserted. Balancing the modest benefits against the harm I have identified, I am not persuaded that they would justify the proposal.
18. The appellants contend that alterations to windows and doors, and the erection of a porch could be undertaken as permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). Be that as it may, no specific 'fall-back' scheme has been put to me for comparison with the appeal proposal, and therefore, it is not shown that such measures would result in similar or worse harm. In any event, unlike permitted development, I am required to assess the planning application against policies in the development plan.
19. Policy LP4 of the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Local Plan, July 2018 (LP) seeks to preserve, and where possible, enhance the significance and character of non-designated heritage assets, including BTMs.
20. Furthermore, policy LP1 of the LP states the high quality, character and heritage of the borough will need to be maintained. It lists matters that will be considered as part of assessing proposals. This includes their proportions, form and detailing as well as the impact on heritage assets. Supporting text at paragraph 4.1.6 of the LP explains that elements such as windows and doors should relate to one another in such a way as to maintain or complement the proportions of the surroundings, particularly as expressed in the relationship between solids and voids. For the reasons explained, the scheme before me would fail to do so satisfactorily.
21. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the appeal property that would unjustifiably erode its significance as a BTM. Therefore, it would be contrary to policies LP1 and LP4 of the LP.

Other matters

22. The wider area to the appeal site provides a rich historic environment with the presence of many designated heritage assets. The most notable and proximate of these is Bushy Park, a Grade I Registered Park and Garden (RPG) which in turn contains many statutorily listed buildings. This approximately 450-hectare parkland lies on the opposite side of Park Road to the appeal site. Much of the area also forms part of the Bushy Park Conservation Area (CA). There is some crossover in the significance of the RPG and CA as they principally stem from the landscape qualities and evolution of the extensive parkland and its close association with Hampton Court Palace. Bushy Park contains many notable formal treed avenues, water features and pockets of woodland.
23. The area opposite the appeal site contains Chestnut Avenue, that lies on a north/south axis with an entrance onto Park Road and has impressive rows of mature trees lining it. Nevertheless, Park Road physically separates and distinguishes the appeal site from the RPG and CA. Owing to the presence of mature trees and the walled boundary, the appeal site does not make a notable contribution to important views from the RPG or CA. Rather, it forms part of the townscape that comprises the backcloth to these sizeable heritage assets.
24. Given the minor scale and visual separation of the proposals in this case, I am satisfied that they would not alter the way the RPG or CA are experienced. It follows that they would not affect the significance of these designated heritage assets, and there is no evidence before me to suggest otherwise.
25. In making my determination I have had regard to the representations in support from neighbouring residents. Both consider the proposals would improve the appearance of no.131. However, for the reasons already outlined, I have found otherwise.
26. The appellants also point to an absence of harm in relation to the living conditions of neighbours, fire safety, trees and the minimisation of flood risk. Be that as it may, other local and national planning policies would require these aspects of the development proposed. Consequently, these are not benefits but rather neutral factors in my determination. It follows that they would not lead me to a different view on the main issue, nor be conclusive factors in the overall balance.

Conclusion

27. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There are no reasons that would justify determining the proposal other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Helen O'Connor

Inspector