

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2024

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/D/24/3338550

6 Seymour Gardens, Feltham TW13 7PQ

- 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 Sandip Sangha against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application, Ref. 01004/6/P7, dated 14 July 2023 was refused by notice dated 28 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a front canopy.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed front canopy on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and of the Hanworth Park Conservation Area ('the CA') which is a designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. The appeal dwelling is a detached dwelling with rooms in the roof and following approval a decade or so ago has had a full height side extension. The permission(s) granted included a central front porch with a gabled roof and this too has been built. The resulting frontage fenestration provides a pleasing impression of symmetry, albeit this being not quite what it seems. This is because the side extension is a little less than half the width of the house and the front windows on the extended side have had to be slightly narrower than those on the original front elevation.
 4. The officers' report explains that an application including the erection of a front canopy was refused in 2012 (dismissed at appeal in 2013) and that an application specifically featuring a front canopy was refused in 2016 for reasons essentially the same as in the current appeal. As regards details, the current proposal is for a canopy across the full 9.5m width of the extended property at a height of 3.87m and a depth of 0.8m. It would be supported on columns at each end and attached to the sides of the gabled front porch.
 5. An appraisal of the appeal scheme is informed by its effect both on the dwelling itself and on the immediate and wider context of the street scene of Seymour Gardens which forms part of the CA. At my visit I saw that although the cul-de-sac is a visual entity it can be more accurately appraised as having three inter-
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relating components: (i) the eight even-numbered Nos. 2-16 on the right hand (north) side; (ii) the eight odd-numbered Nos. 1-15 on the left hand (south) side, and (iii) five houses, Nos. 18 & 20 and 17,19 & 21 grouped around the hammer head of the cul-de-sac. In the even-numbered group, five of the eight have front canopies with three of them full width; in the odd-numbered group the comparative figures are four of eight with two full width, and in the hammer head group just one of the five - No. 19 and part width.

6. There is a conflict of evidence in the appeal in that the appellant says that the full width canopy at No. 10 was recently granted permission and has been erected in the last 6 to 8 months, whereas the Council states that the decision was made 16 years ago. More generally, the Council says that many of the approvals are historic (the dates given include the late C19th and early C20th) and that there have been no approvals since two dismissed appeals in 2019 in respect of No. 8 and that three canopies have been constructed (no dates specified) without planning permission and could be open to enforcement action. However, in the initial Planning Statement for the appeal application it is argued for the appellant that most of the similar front canopies that already exist *'have been approved and built within the last 6-8 years'*.
7. I regard the Council's position on the overall planning history to be the more reliable and it does appear to be clear that specifically in respect of No. 6, the decisions of 2012, 2013 and 2016 fully support the Council's view of the current proposal that a full width canopy would harm the appearance of the property, including its sympathetic two storey side extension.
8. The proposal would have a redeeming feature in that the central gable porch would to some degree break up the horizontal emphasis that the canopy would bring to the appearance, but the canopy would nonetheless partly mask the bay windows and be a dominant feature on the front elevation. This would be contrary to the Council's Residential Extensions Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document 2017 ('the SPD') and in my view reduce the design quality and therefore the appearance of the front elevation.
9. The harm to the appearance of the dwelling would be compounded by the harm caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area. No. 6 falls within group (i), to which I make reference in paragraph 5 above, and in which there are eight houses. And if I were to allow the appeal this would be the sixth house in the group to have a front canopy and the fourth to have one that is full width. Paradoxically this is the basis of the appeal in that it is argued that it is unfair to resist another canopy when so many of the houses already have one. I understand this argument and that it is a view with which many of the residents agree. I also recognise that canopies have practical benefits for day-to-day living including weather protection.
10. However, Seymour Gardens is a mid C19th development and with its similar external materials and house designs the road is clearly the product of a single development scheme. The quality of the design and layout and the inter-relationship of the houses with their surroundings and neighbours to form an attractive and well-balanced street scene was considered sufficient for the road to be included within the 1984 designated CA (and despite the subsequent addition of a number of front canopies retained therein in its 2021 update). The

variety of designs but consistency of external materials is an especially positive feature.

11. Despite the appeal proposal not being one of the more harmful front canopies already adversely affecting the character and appearance of their host dwellings and the street scene, if I were to allow the appeal these ubiquitous additions would dominate the north side of the road with only two of the dwellings in this group without a canopy, and one of the two (No.8) also the subject of a similar current appeal. And the inclusion of similar canopies on many of the houses draws the eye away from the aforementioned variety of design in the original development and in my view is visually intrusive.
12. In addition to Section 4 of the SPD requiring front extensions to houses to be minor and not alter the overall appearance of the house or dominate the character of the street, the Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 includes Policies CC1 (requiring development to have regard to context and safeguard character); CC2 (development to provide high quality urban design and architecture), and SC7 (requiring residential extensions and alterations not to harm the existing character and appearance of the building and its context). The fact that Seymour Gardens is part of the CA brings with it a statutory duty for development to at least preserve and where possible enhance its character and appearance.
13. The proposed canopy would be in harmful conflict with these policies and would have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and also fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA, thereby diminishing its significance as a heritage asset. Paragraph 208 of Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (as amended December 2023) says that in cases of development leading to 'less than substantial harm' (a phrase that excludes only the most egregious effects) to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. However, in this instance I consider that there are no such benefits.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons explained above, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR