

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/24/3338549

8 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 Pawan Sondhi against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application, Ref. 01004/8/P4, dated 14 July 2023 was refused by notice dated 28 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a front canopy and porch.
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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 an asymmetrical roof design and includes a smaller but still two storey gabled front projection. The dwelling has essentially the same design as No. 10, its immediate neighbour on its western flank, although the latter also has a full width front canopy which the officer's report says was approved retrospectively in 2007. The current proposal is for a lean-to tiled canopy across the full width of the dwelling with four supporting columns and the existing porch extended forward to the new eaves line.
 4. The officers' report explains that an application for the erection of a front porch and canopy was refused in October 2018 and dismissed at appeal in February 2019. A subsequent application for just a front canopy was refused in April 2019 and dismissed at appeal in June 2019. Paragraph 9.8 of the report explains that with the exception of an extra two columns the current proposal is identical to the first of the above applications and broadly similar to the second.
 5. I have read both appeal decisions which were appended to the report and have had particular regard to the Inspector's analysis and findings in their decision of February 2019. I did so bearing in mind firstly that that proposal was essentially the same as that now put forward and secondly that I have not
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been made aware of any material changes in circumstances since this decision was made.

6. 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-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.
7. 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 the aforementioned two dismissed appeals in 2019 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*'. I consider the Council's position to be the more reliable but in any event the February 2019 appeal decision must carry significantly more weight in my appraisal of this appeal.
8. In paragraph 5 of this decision the comment is made that '*The proposed development would add a pitched and tiled canopy above the ground floor that would stretch across the full width of the front elevation. Such an extensive and visually prominent addition would introduce a horizontal emphasis to the façade that would sit awkwardly and run counter to the characteristic vertical form of the house*'.
9. I agree with these comments and given that the present appeal scheme is little more than a repetition of that proposal I do not consider that further analysis is needed, especially as the Inspector in the June 2019 appeal on the very similar scheme also provided a detailed appraisal. To sum up, I am satisfied that the proposed canopy and porch would be contrary to the Council's Residential Extensions Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document 2017 ('the SPD') and in my view would reduce the design quality and therefore appearance of the front elevation.
10. 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. 8 falls within group (i), to which I make reference in paragraph 6 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.

11. 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 were 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.
12. 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.6) also the subject of a similar current appeal. And the addition of similar canopies on so many of the houses draws the eye away from the aforementioned variety of design in the original development and is in my view visually intrusive.
13. 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.
14. 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

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

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR