



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2024

by Jonathan Edwards BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/T5720/W/23/3331636

30 Denmark Road, Wimbledon, Merton, London SW19 4PG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission
 - The appeal is made by Mr Stephen Elsworth against the Council of the London Borough of Merton.
 - The application Ref is 23/P1177.
 - The development proposed is described as "Create an additional bedroom by converting the roofspace. The proposal is to change the roof from a hip to gable. Roof tiles will match the existing. The gable end is proposed to be clad with tiles to match the roof but input from the conservation officers would be welcome. One roof window is proposed on the street facing side. At the rear, a dormer and 3 roof windows are proposed. The window in the dormer would be in keeping with the existing style of the dwelling. The dormer walls and roof are proposed to be clad with tiles that match with the existing roof."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission for dormer roof extension with three roof windows; change in roof form from hip to gable and roof window facing street is refused.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the header is taken from the application form. The appeal form gives a shorter description, which is used by the Council in its submissions. No prejudice would be caused by basing my assessment on the revised description and this is reflected in the wording of my decision.
3. Since the appeal was lodged, a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published. The provisions of the Framework relevant to this appeal have largely remained unaltered and so there is no need to seek comments from the parties on the revisions.

Main Issues

4. Having regard to the Council's submissions in response to the appeal, a main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. An additional matter is whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wimbledon West Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal property (No 30) is a 2 storey house at the end of a short terrace. Denmark Road slopes downwards pass the appeal site and to reflect the topography the houses in the terrace step down in height towards No 30. The neighbouring unattached property (No 31) is one of a pair of semi-detached houses on a slightly lower level than the appeal property.
6. The CA covers mainly residential streets. The appellant has provided extracts from a Conservation Area Appraisal published in 2004 (the Appraisal). This explains that the CA's character depends on the quality of its buildings and their preservation and enhancement. The Appraisal is now rather dated but this quote is still pertinent. From my observations, the age of many of the buildings as well as the retention of their original form and architecture contribute considerably towards the significance of the CA.
7. The Appraisal describes Denmark Road as consisting of excellent Victorian cottages of great charm. Also mentioned is the narrowness of the road with short front gardens, meaning that the attractiveness of the dwellings can be clearly appreciated when on the street. No 30 is of Victorian construction and it appears outwardly to be little altered. It is not listed or formally identified as a non-designated heritage asset but the dwelling is of an appearance, scale and form that reflects most other nearby properties. As such, it makes a positive contribution towards the charm of Denmark Road and the role the street makes towards the qualities of the CA.
8. The Council's concerns relate specifically to the proposed change of the hip at the side of the roof to a gable. This alteration would be seen from the road directly to the front as well as further away, particularly where Denmark Road meets St John's Road. From this direction, there is a tendency to look up at the houses given the upwards slope of the land and their close proximity to the highway. Despite the partial screening of the property by bushes to the front, the proposed alteration to the hipped roof would be clearly seen from the road.
9. No 31 and the dwelling it is attached to have side hipped roofs similar to that at No 30. Also, while there are some exceptions, many of the properties on the same side of the road to No 30 have hipped roofs. Other types of roofs that exist appear to be as originally built rather than as a result of alterations or extensions. Where changes have been made, these tend to be either minor addition of rooflights or dormers on the rear of properties. I note the Appraisal does not identify roof forms on Denmark Road as making a particular contribution to the value of the CA. Even so, within the context of attractive and largely unaltered buildings, the change from a hipped to a gable roof as proposed would appear unusual.
10. Also, as it stands, the hipped roof on No 30 faces towards a similar hip on No 31. This helps ensure a gentle sloping down effect within the line of properties that is appreciated as you walk along the street. The proposed gable would result in a more abrupt step down that would appear jarring, particularly as the side to No 31 is close to the appeal property. The use of materials to match the existing roof and the retention of the ridge line at the same height would not fully address nor overcome this harmful effect.
11. I understand the current proposal represents a revision to previous schemes that proposed larger alterations to No 30. However, it does not follow the

appeal development would have an acceptable effect. Also, extensions to roofs may be commonplace in urban areas but this does not justify a development that would be harmful to the original qualities of a property that contributes to the significance of the CA.

12. The Council has raised no objection to the other proposed alterations and I find no reason to disagree. The changes to the rear would not be prominent from the street and the rooflight to the front would be visually innocuous as it would be small and set within the roof slope.
13. However, for the above reasons, I conclude the development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality. Consequently, it would not preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the CA. In these regards, it would be contrary to policy HC1 of the London Plan 2021 (the LP), policy CS14 of the Council's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and policies DM D2, DM D3 and DM D4 of the Council's Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Maps dated 9 July 2014. Amongst other things, these policies look to ensure development conserves and enhances heritage assets and that alterations to buildings, including changes to roof forms, are appropriate. The Council's refusal reasons also refer to LP policies D1 and D4 but these contain no provisions relevant to the assessment of this appeal.

Other Considerations and Heritage Balance.

14. The detriment caused to the character and appearance of the CA would be limited given the minor nature of the proposal and its localised visual impact. Having regard to the terms used in the Framework, the development would cause less than substantial harm to the CA's significance. In light of paragraph 208 of the Framework, it follows to consider whether the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh this harm.
15. The development would not be detrimental to the living conditions at nearby residences nor to any features of biodiversity interest. Acceptability in these regards is a neutral factor in my assessment.
16. The proposal would lead to more useable accommodation but there is little evidence before me to suggest the living environment at the property is substandard. The development would support employment in construction and related trades. However, the public benefits in these respects would be minor given the scale of the proposal.
17. The Framework states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, irrespective as to whether development causes substantial or less than substantial harm. With this in mind, I consider the public benefits of the development do not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the qualities and the significance of the CA.

Conclusion

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

Jonathan Edwards

INSPECTOR