



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 June 2024

by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/23/3330617

9 and 10 The Shrubberies, George Lane, South Woodford, London E18 1BD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Rhydian Tharratt, JRZ Holdings Limited, against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref is 1903/23.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of loft area into additional office space, including forming dormers to rear and installing rooflights to front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. Whether or not the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the George Lane Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a pair of two storey semi-detached properties in commercial use. The building is located within the George Lane Conservation Area (the GLCA). This is a small conservation area which encompasses the rows of semi-detached properties on The Shrubberies. Its significance appears to be derived from the uniform Victorian properties which are rich in architectural detailing. They give the GLCA a strong character.
4. By virtue of the appeal building's distinctive front bay windows, London yellow stock brick with decorative banding, stucco detailing, sash windows and key stones the property is a pleasing example within the GLCA and it makes a positive contribution towards its character and the high-quality townscape.
5. The rooflights proposed to the front would be aligned to the fenestration below and would be of a conservation design. Despite this, they would not be visually discrete additions but rather they would be uncharacteristic and intrusive features to the appearance of the historic roofline as they would be unduly prominent due to their sheer quantity and size.
6. The proposed rear dormers would be of an excessive width and overall size such that they would be unsympathetic additions which would totally dominate the rear roof slope of the appeal building. Collectively they would erode the historic distinction between the two properties making up this pair. This would result in harm to the overall character of the GLCA, regardless of whether or not the proposal would be readily apparent from public vantage points.

7. My attention has been drawn to the dormer windows to the front of 11 and 12 The Shrubberies, rooflights to the front of 1 and 2 The Shrubberies and alterations of varying scale and design to the rear of all of these properties. I note that planning permission was not granted for the front dormer windows. Furthermore, the history of the front rooflights to Nos 1 and 2, along with the alterations to the rear of Nos 1, 2, 11 and 12 is not before me therefore I cannot ascertain the circumstances around their approval and make a reasoned comparison with the appeal proposal.
8. Moreover, these examples are limited and are clearly discordant developments that are at odds with the front and rear of the original properties within the GLCA which remain well preserved with a good degree of uniformity. By virtue of these factors, these examples do not justify the proposed development.
9. I also observed the development to the side of No 12. Again, I do not have a record of the planning approval before me thus cannot ascertain the circumstances around its approval. Nevertheless, this example does not appear to involve alteration to an original building which contributes towards the significance of the GLCA, but rather is adjacent to such a building. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its own merits.
10. Given the scale of the development in context, the level of harm it would cause to the significance of the GLCA is less than substantial. Nevertheless, paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is clear 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 its significance.
11. Paragraph 208 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. My attention has not been drawn to any specific public benefits which may arise from the appeal development, however I note that it would facilitate additional office space. Therefore, the additional jobs this may generate would be a benefit of the proposal. However, due to the scale of the development the benefits it would generate would be limited. Therefore, the harm to the GLCA that I have identified would not be outweighed.
12. Accordingly, the development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the GLCA and therefore conflicts with Policy HC1 of The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (March 2021) and Policies LP26 and LP33 of the Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030 (March 2018). Together these policies seek to ensure that developments conserve the significance, character and appearance of heritage assets.

Conclusion

13. The development conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the approach in the Framework, which indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should not succeed.

H Ellison
INSPECTOR