



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 July 2024

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/23/3336135

159B Latchmere Road, Wandsworth, London SW11 2JZ

- 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 Benjamin Stannard against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application reference is 2023/3742.
 - The development proposed is erection of a mansard roof extension to the main roof and extension over the back addition forming a one bed apartment with glazed roof terrace. Installation of PV solar panels to flat roof and installation of roof lights to front roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 30 July 2024, the Government published a consultation on "Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system" and the "National Planning Policy Framework: draft text for consultation", alongside a Written Ministerial Statement entitled "Building the homes we need". The Framework proposals remain in draft form and attract limited weight at this stage. I am satisfied that the proposed changes do not fundamentally alter the policies most relevant to the appeal and do not prejudice any party. Therefore, whilst I have had regard to these as material considerations, it has not been necessary to seek further comments from the parties.
3. The proposal to erect roof extensions over the main roof and rear wing is very similar in design to a proposal dismissed at appeal in January 2024¹, the principal difference being that the current scheme includes the creation of a separate one bedroom flat. I am also informed of a subsequent planning permission granted at the appeal site in April 2024². I have had regard to both of these decisions as material considerations.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Town Hall Road Conservation Area (the THRCA).

¹ Appeal Ref APP/H5690/W/23/3322256

² Council Ref 2024/0363

Reasons

5. The appeal relates to a top floor flat within a three storey, end-of-terrace building standing at the corner of Latchmere Road and Heathwall Street within the THRCA. The Council's Conservation Area Appraisal describes the THRCA as a contemporary mixed townscape surrounding the key building of the former Battersea Town Hall, now the Battersea Arts Centre, a Grade II* listed building. It is a compact conservation area encompassing three main streets sloping steeply down from Lavender Hill.
6. The terrace of Latchmere Road comprises late 19th century tenement flats of three storeys. Whilst described as 'drab and dowdy' and architecturally modest for their time, they are noted as retaining their original front walls and red brick piers, most still having timber sash windows and matching pairs of entrance doors, which maintain consistency and a robust quality. The appraisal notes that the terrace contributes most significantly in townscape terms by providing a strong visual emphasis to the steepness of the slope as it steps relentlessly up the hill. This consistency of decorative yet restrained detailing, imposing scale and appreciation for and reflection of the sloping topography contributes to the significance of the THRCA.
7. The appeal building is the nearest building in views of the whole terrace up Latchmere Road, where its flank elevation and original sloping roof shape is seen in addition to the consistent front elevations. The existing roof, and its contribution to the wider, stepped roofscape pattern of the rear of the terrace is further visible from Heathwall Street.
8. The proposal would comprise a substantial, flat-roofed extension, with a virtually full-width rear dormer element extending over and beyond the main rear roof slope and onto the roof of the rear wing, which would also be removed in its entirety beyond the proposed extension to accommodate a roof terrace. The bulky shape and contemporary form of the extension would be in stark contrast to the understated traditional architecture of the host building and wider terrace. The addition of other modern elements such as expansive windows and glazed balustrades to the roof terrace would exacerbate this contrast.
9. Moreover, the extension would spread across two distinct roof slopes in a monolithic shape which would fail to respect the existing form, orientation and hierarchy of the roof and the overall building. In particular, the loss of all existing sloping roofs would severely erode the legibility of the building. The lone retention of the rear parapet wall would be insufficient to overcome this, as the boxy shape and extensive glazing of the windows and balustrades would be clearly seen, and the roof terrace would invite additional paraphernalia such as tables and chairs that would further draw the eye to the extension. Whilst I note that the proposal seeks to retain the two chimneys on the flank elevation, these would provide little screening of the extension which, due to its size and form, would be readily visible from Heathwall Street and from across the junction on Latchmere Road.
10. In these respects, the extension would conflict with the guidance of the Council's Housing Supplementary Planning Document (November 2016) (the Housing SPD) which sets out that, on corner buildings in prominent locations, extensions should consist of a well-proportioned and traditionally detailed

dormer on the rear roof slope, set lower than the ridge and sufficiently far in from the edge in order to preserve the shape of the gable end.

11. The appellant points to Heathwall Street being divided between two conservation areas and lacking strong characteristics owing to its limited and varying built form, including garages with planning permission for conversion to a contemporary dwelling. I agree that there is less cohesiveness to Heathwall Street as it acts as a cross street at the end of the three main terraces of the THRCA and many buildings address it side-on, whilst rear gardens and garages back onto its northern side. However, the proposal would be understood less in terms of long vistas from the east on Heathwall Street and more in terms of the terrace of which the appeal building forms part, and the fact that there is more variety to Heathwall Street would not mitigate the harm in this respect.
12. The plans before me are very similar to those put to appeal in 2023. The fact that this proposal would create a separate residential unit has no bearing on its impact on the character and appearance of the area. Moreover, I note that several of the examples of purportedly similar development advanced by the appellant in this case are the same examples given in the previous appeal³. I concur with my colleague that these examples differ in terms of location and context, and indeed in terms of their detailed size and form, such that they are not directly analogous to the appeal scheme before me. The same can be said of the extension to the Battersea Arts Centre, which is on a building of very different scale, form and function, and the other examples put to me⁴. Thus, they do not alter my overall assessment of the proposal. It is also notable that the appellant has put forward some of the same examples in this appeal but makes no comment on the appeal decision, despite their similarities.
13. The appellant also refers to some four examples of similar extensions on the terrace of Latchmere Road itself. I am not provided with their planning histories to understand the circumstances of their construction. However, whilst I was able to see the nearest of these extensions in views from Heathwall Street, it and the others are less prominently located in mid-terrace positions, where buildings in the foreground provide screening. The appeal site differs in this respect, which is exemplified by the specific guidance of the SPD for corner buildings. Moreover, these examples remain a small minority relative to the whole terrace, and I am not persuaded that they have altered the terrace to such an extent that they have now become characteristic features that would justify the proposal.
14. Finally, I have had regard to the planning permission granted at the appeal site. This is notably different in form, with a demonstrably smaller and more traditionally proportioned rear dormer window, no further extension over the rear wing and a modest terrace concealed behind the sloping roof of the rear wing, which is otherwise retained. From the evidence before me, this scheme acknowledges the guidance of the SPD and respects the existing form and character of the building. Therefore, as a fall-back position for the appellant, it does not pose a greater level of harm that would lend support to the appeal scheme as the less harmful alternative.

³ Those at 60A Prince of Wales Drive, 67 Clapham Common North Side and 7 Kersley Street

⁴ Those at 61 Clapham Common West Side, 74 and 75 Clapham Common North Side, 53 Clapham Common North Side and 25 Kersley Street.

15. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the THRCA. The proposal would be in conflict with Policies LP1, LP3 and LP5 of the Wandsworth Local Plan (July 2023), which require development to add to the overall quality of the area and be of a layout, scale, materials, detailing and design that would complement the locality; and to preserve and, wherever possible, enhance the significance, appearance, character, function and setting of any heritage asset. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance of the Housing SPD.
16. Having regard to the Framework, the development in this case would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. In this circumstance, the Framework requires that the less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits. The proposal would in this case create an additional residential unit. This would add to the borough's housing stock and accord with the Framework aim of boosting the supply of housing nationally. However, a single flat would provide a benefit of no more than limited weight in this respect. Any economic benefits accruing from its construction and subsequent use of local businesses by occupants would be similarly modest in scale and of limited weight in the balance.
17. For these reasons, I find that the public benefits in this case would not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area. As such, the Framework indicates that this provides a clear reason for refusing the proposal, and this is a significant material consideration in the overall planning balance.

Other Matters

18. The Council did not refuse the application in respect of any other matter and, having regard to the evidence before me, I find no reasons to disagree. However, the absence of harm in respect of these other matters means they are neutral factors in the overall planning balance, weighing neither for nor against the development.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the Framework that indicate the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Savage

INSPECTOR