



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2024

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Z5060/D/24/3348784

96 Valence Wood Road, Dagenham, RM8 3AP

- 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 Albert Gradica against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
 - The application Ref is 24/00453/HSE.
 - The development proposed is construction of a front infill extension with relocation of front door and replacement of bay window to a double-glazed window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. In September 2024, the Council adopted the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Local Plan 2020 – 2037 (LP). Draft policies SP2, DMD4 and DMD6 of that document were listed in the reasons for refusal. The new Local Plan was adopted after this appeal was lodged.
3. As a result of the adoption, Policies CP2 and CP3 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2010) and Policies BP2, BP8 and BP11 of the Local Development Framework Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document (2011) have been superseded and are no longer in force.
4. The text of draft Policies SP2 and DMD6 is largely unchanged insofar as they relate to this appeal, although the latter has been renumbered as Policy DMD 5 in the adopted Local Plan. The text of draft Policy DMD 4 is more altered, but does not materially change the policy as it relates to the proposal. The appellant had the opportunity to comment on the previously adopted and draft policies in submitting the appeal, and as the policies of most relevance to this proposal have not changed fundamentally it has not been necessary to seek further comments.
5. At the time of the unaccompanied appeal site visit, the open porch had been infilled, with the entrance door flush with the main front elevation. For the avoidance of doubt, I have based this appeal decision on the development shown on the submitted plans, with a door and window offset from the doorway of the neighbouring property.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal property, the terrace of which it forms part, the street scene and the wider Becontree Estate.

Reasons

7. The appeal property is a mid-terrace dwelling located within the Becontree Estate, an interwar public housing development that has a distinctive local character, partly due to its consistency of design. This part of Valence Wood Road is characterised by terraced housing, and although a number of properties have been altered, paired entrances containing recessed doors to each attached property are prevalent, albeit the style varies. In some cases, the recess has been infilled with one or two entrance doors, and there are also examples of protruding porches. However, the original detail of a recessed and shared open porch remains a discernible feature that makes a positive contribution to the street scene and wider estate.
8. Where they exist, these entrances and the regular spacing of bay or flush windows provide rhythm along the terrace to which they relate. The terrace row that contains the appeal property was originally balanced in this way, with the two end properties being accessed from the sides, and a pattern of recessed porches and bays along the terrace length.
9. Notwithstanding that the existing recess has been infilled at the appeal property, the proposed relocation of the front door and introduction of an extra window to its side would materially disrupt this distinctive pattern of openings, to the detriment of the original character and appearance of the appeal property, the terrace of which it forms part, the street scene, and the wider Becontree Estate. This would be at odds with LP Policy SP2, which seeks to ensure that developments relate to their local context and character, and where applicable, use this to inform detail; and with advice in the Council's 'Residential Extensions and Alterations' Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (SPD), which notes the importance of a front extension reflecting any existing detailing on the house which contributes positively to its character, and of preserving or replicating any distinct architectural features.
10. The appellant has drawn attention to other examples in the vicinity where entrance doors have been altered, but no details have been supplied, and as such it is not known if they required or received express permission; the Council's delegated report indicates that these infills have largely been completed without planning permission, and are not Permitted Development. However, of those cited, the position of entrance doors does not appear to have changed, but instead the recessed porch has been infilled with one or two doors, thereby retaining the balanced appearance and spacing within the terrace. As such, these examples offer limited support to the proposal.
11. Becontree Estate is regarded as a non-designated heritage asset, and in accordance with paragraph 209 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), in assessing the appeal, a balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss arising from the proposal and the significance of the heritage asset. This is reflected in LP Policy DMD 4. In this case, no benefits of the proposal have been put forward that would outweigh the harm outlined above.

12. The Council's delegated report indicates that express planning permission would not be required to remove the existing bay window. Whilst this may be the case, I share the Council's assessment that the loss of this feature would be harmful to the character and appearance of the property, and consider that it would detract from the rhythm of the terrace.
13. I conclude that the proposed construction of a front infill extension with relocation of front door would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal property, the terrace of which it forms part, the street scene and the wider Becontree Estate. This would conflict with the Framework, with the overarching design and conservation aims of Policies D4 and HC1 of The London Plan 2021, LP Policies SP2, DMD 4, and DMD 5, which amongst other criteria requires any householder alteration to be sympathetic to the design of the original dwelling in matters including form and detailing.
14. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR