



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 March 2025

by N Duff BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 June 2025.

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/24/3345430

61 Ground Floor Flat, Beatrice Avenue, Norbury, Croydon, London SW16 4UW

- 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 Mark Cox against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref is 23/03743/FUL.
 - The development proposed is alteration to front fenestration of building involving replacement of white timber-framed window opening at ground floor level with white double-glazed uPVC-framed window opening.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form states that the development has not begun. I saw during my site visit that a window with a similar appearance to the proposed was in situ. Nevertheless, I cannot be certain that this window is the same as on the plans before me. I will therefore consider this appeal on the basis of the existing and proposed plans that are before me and that were before the Council when it made its decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue of the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, having particular regard to the Beatrice Avenue Local Heritage Area (LHA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a ground floor flat of a detached traditional property, on a corner plot, facing Beatrice Avenue with Beech Road running alongside the dwelling. The property is located in a residential area with similar properties opposite and further along Beatrice Avenue. A mature domestic hedgerow encloses the front garden with a pedestrian access off Beech Road. The fenestration of the property is varied.
5. The properties along Beatrice Avenue are included within the LHA which is a local heritage designation. The area is described in the 'Section 2: Areas proposed for the local heritage area designation' document as being characterised by its attractive well preserved late Victorian early Edwardian suburban houses, with many original and individually designed Arts and Crafts inspired features and is a good example of urban design from this period.

6. The proposal for the replacement of one of the ground floor windows on the front elevation of the property would see the loss of the 'existing' window which as shown on the plans is has decorative lights, matching those of the other window on the front elevation and has a timber casement, painted white. This window is proposed to be replaced with a uPVC double glazed window with an enlarged lead effect pattern. The window openings have a similar configuration as the window shown to be replaced. The large bay window on the property is shown to be retained.
7. The original glazing has a lightness and design typical of Arts and Crafts inspired features found in the area. The loss of the window would see the loss of these original glazing features and fenestration typical of the properties in Beatrice Avenue.
8. The proposed replacement window has a simple glazing pattern with lead style glazing bars. The proposed uPVC window would be double glazed, which in my view has a bulkier and shinier, modern finish in comparison to the original single glazed timber. The proposed glazing would not include the ornate detail as seen in the original, and although some detailing would be provided through the glazing bars this would be bulkier than the original. Therefore, in my view, it would not be a replication in style or detailing of the original window and would be at odds with the prevailing character of the area, and indeed the adjacent window on the ground floor front elevation of the host property shown to be retained.
9. Regarding the Borough Character Appraisal 2015 (online version) I note its aims to preserve architectural character and support heritage conservation, therefore the removal of the window would fail to accord with these aims.
10. Having regard to Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). I find that the loss and replacement of the window would dilute the character of the area, of which the Arts and Crafts inspired features such as fenestration forms an important part. The proposal would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the LHA and directly affect the non-designated heritage asset and would cause harm to it.
11. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed replacement window would have a negative effect on the character and appearance of the area having particular regard to the LHA. It would therefore fail to accord with policies DM10, DM18 and SP4 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018) (CLP) which between them seek to create a high quality built environment, retaining original architectural features that contribute to the architectural character and to ensure that significant weight is given to protecting and enhancing buildings and townscape features that make a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of a LHA.
12. The proposal would also be contrary to policies D4 and HC1 of The London Plan (2021) (LP) which between them seek to ensure that development delivers high quality design and that development proposals affecting heritage assets should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings.
13. For the reasons mentioned the proposal would also be contrary to paragraph 135 of the Framework which states that decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history.

Other Matters

14. I have been provided with an example of uPVC windows having been approved by the Council at number 11 Beatrice Avenue some time ago. I have limited information before me regarding this planning application, however, the Council's evidence does state that the approved uPVC windows in this case did not replace timber windows. Therefore, due to this I am unable to make a meaningful comparison between the schemes. During my site visit, I did however witness some examples of replacement windows on Beatrice Avenue, I do not have information on the circumstances of how these replacements came about, however, the uPVC windows appeared at odds with the prevailing character of their host properties. Therefore, their presence would not provide justification for further development that I consider would also result in such harm as identified in the main issue.
15. I note that the proposal would improve the energy efficiency of the property, due to the provision of a double-glazed window reducing heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer and the associated benefits this would bring. Therefore, would comply with policy D6 of the LP insofar as it relates to functionality and avoiding overheating. Whilst this would be beneficial, given the small scale of the proposal, this would attract limited weight and would not outweigh the harm identified in the main issue.
16. A benefit of the proposed window is that it would be unlikely to require regular maintenance unlike timber windows, further, it would not require painting and would be resistant to weathering. Whilst timber windows could require regular painting and maintenance, I have no evidence to suggest that timber windows require more regular replacement than uPVC windows, when suitably maintained. Whilst the reduced need for maintenance is a benefit, this matter would attract limited weight and would not outweigh the harm identified in the main issue.
17. The appellant has stated that the proposal would improve safety, security, resistance to adverse weather conditions, and fire safety. Whilst this may be the case, I have no substantial evidence to demonstrate that timber could not fulfil these functions in accordance with policies D11 and D12 of the LP, therefore, given the small scale of the development and the retention of timber windows elsewhere, this matter attracts limited weight and would not outweigh the harm identified in the main issue.
18. Regarding policies D1 and GG2 of the LP these relate to the requirements for London Boroughs to carry out area assessments in relation to growth and making the best use of land, therefore these policies do not directly link to the main issue in this case.

Conclusion

19. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

N Duff

INSPECTOR