Planning Inspectorate

Costs Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2026

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th February 2026

Costs application in relation to Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/25/3371379
Vine Lodge, Church Road, Isleworth TW7 4PH

- The application is made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, sections 78, 322 and Schedule 6, and the Local Government Act 1972, section 250(5).
- The application is made by Mr Manoj Khanna for a full award of costs against the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
- The appeal was against the refusal of planning permission for demolition of existing building and creation of 6 self-contained flats with bin storage, cycle store and car park.

Decision

1. The application for an award of costs is refused.

Reasons

2. Parties in planning appeals normally meet their own expenses. However, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that costs may be awarded against a party who has behaved unreasonably and thereby caused the party applying for costs to incur unnecessary or wasted expense in the appeal process.

3. The applicant's claim, in short, is that the Council took an excessive length of time to determine the application, some six and a half months, showing no regard to the applicant. It is further argued that the Council added the appeal dwelling to its local heritage list after the application was made in order to stop development.

4. The Council in response states that the time taken was in part due to very high volumes of casework stretching officer resources during that period. However, it sets out that the applicant submitted various amended documents close to and beyond the statutory decision period, which were accepted by the Council and considered as part of the proposal. It is also indicated that the applicant was advised of officers' position on the application before determination, and that this was consistent with the position taken on several previous applications on the site.

5. Any delay beyond the expected timeline for a decision is understandably frustrating for applicants. However, the evidence before me indicates that the applicant was updating the application documents as late as 2 October 2024, well beyond the eight week period that ended on 2 September 2024. There follows an extended period to mid-February 2025 where the evidence suggests no correspondence took place. Beyond its general reference to caseload volumes, the Council has not provided an adequate explanation for this delay. I find this delay in making a decision and lack of intervening explanation by the Council to be unreasonable. However, for an award of costs to succeed, such behaviour must also have resulted in unnecessary or wasted costs on the part of the claimant.

6. In this respect, given the outcome of the appeal, the Council did justify its eventual decision in relation to the proposal and its actions did not prevent or delay development which should have been permitted. On that basis, whilst the Council's behaviour was in part unreasonable, it did not involve the applicant in unnecessary or wasted expense in making an appeal that should not have been necessary.

7. Turning to the second matter, the applicant refers to the fact that several previous applications were made where the Council did not identify the appeal site as a non-designated heritage asset, and points to it not being identified as a positive contributor in the Spring Grove Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2019) (the CAA). The Council's process for adding a building to its local list is a separate process to the appeal before me. I have no evidence to indicate that the Council has acted incorrectly or inappropriately in this process, and it is ultimately for the applicant to pursue as a matter of local government accountability should he still have misgivings as to the process followed by the Council.

8. Whilst I have had regard to the timeline of previous applications and the content of the CAA, I must determine the appeal on the basis of the current site circumstances, which includes any relevant designations. The applicant was fully aware of the Council's decision to list, and has been able to address the matter through the submitted Heritage Statement, to which I have had regard. I have also taken account of the Council's reasons for adding Vine Lodge to its Local Heritage List and the views of consultees on the significance of the building. My own observations also contributed to what was ultimately a matter of planning judgment for me as the decision maker. As will be seen in my decision, I have agreed with the Council's position and considered Vine Lodge to be a non-designated heritage asset. In the circumstances, therefore, I do not identify any unreasonable behaviour by the Council in this matter either in procedural or substantive terms.

Conclusion

9. I therefore conclude that for the reasons set out above, unreasonable behaviour resulting in unnecessary or wasted expense during the appeal process has not been demonstrated. Having regard to all matters raised, an award of costs is not justified, and no award is made.

K Savage

INSPECTOR