



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2014

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 30 October 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/D/14/2225286

193 Leighton Road, London NW5 2RD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Samantha Stork against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2014/4091/P, dated 16 June 2014, was refused by notice dated 30 July 2014.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a side extension and roof conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the erection of a side extension.
2. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a roof conversion at 193 Leighton Road, London NW5 2RD in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 2014/4091/P, dated 16 June 2014, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) That part of the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Refs LR/P01, LR/P02, LR/P03, LR/P04, LR/P11, LR/P12A, LR/P13B and LR/P14B.
 - 3) No development shall take place until samples to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the dormer extension hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property, 193 Leighton Road, is one of a pair of broadly matching 2-storey semi-detached houses that face Leighton Road, which has an eclectic mix of buildings along its considerable length. This pair of houses is characterised primarily by hip end tiled roofs, part brick and part render walls,
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2-storey front bay windows, a projecting first floor front window and a semi-circular arch over an open front porch.

5. While there are some differences between these attached houses, such as the roof light on the front roof slope of No 193, this pairing is unified in general appearance by the common design, external materials, detailing and pattern of fenestration. No 193 and its counterpart have no obvious architectural or historic merit and are not located within a conservation area. Nevertheless, the broad unity in the appearance of these properties positively contributes to the visual character of the local street scene of which they form part.
6. The proposal is primarily to erect a part single storey, part 2-storey extension at the side of No 193 following demolition and removal of the single storey garage. The new addition would be set back from the front building line of the main house and aims to be subordinate in scale to it. Unlike the traditional style and pitched roof form of the dwelling to which it would attach, the proposal would be of modern design with a flat roof, and include rendered masonry above timber cladding and timber shutters.
7. To my mind, such a design approach would not, in principle, necessarily look out of place especially given that there is a modern style addition adjacent to 57 Brecknock Road, the rear of which is clearly evident beyond No 193, when seen from Leighton Road. In marked contrast to the proposal, this 3-storey development is more substantive in built form and in my judgement it addresses the road as a single entity. It does not attach to a matching pair of semi-detached houses, as in this case. I also consider that the local area within which the site is located, whilst having a coherent residential character, is capable of successfully accommodating a variety of dwellings in terms of design, size and materials. Given the relatively generous gap at the side of No 193, I also see no obvious reason why, in principle, a 2-storey side extension at this location should be considered unacceptable, as the Council suggests.
8. Nevertheless, in this case, the size, shape and position of the new front windows would neither broadly align with nor successfully relate to the fenestration in the host building and its attached counterpart. With its flat roof and stepped profile, the proposal would have an overly bulky shape and that would relate awkwardly to the more traditional design and proportions of the host building. By resulting in a significantly larger property with an extended principal elevation, the proposal would also disrupt the symmetry between the two dwellings as a matching pair by unbalancing the front elevation. In doing so, a discordant element would be added to the built frontage to Leighton Road, which would be obtrusive in the local street scene and an unwelcome addition to the local area.
9. Furthermore, the top of the solar panels to be installed would project above the roofline of the extension and thus be conspicuous from the road due to their elevated and upstanding position. When seen from Leighton Road as well as the upper rear windows of 55 and 57 Becknock Road, the new solar panels at high level would draw the eye and in my opinion appear as an incongruous feature on the enlarged dwelling.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) notes that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes

and should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. The Framework does, however, state that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

11. Against that background, I conclude that the proposed side extension would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the local street scene to which it belongs. Accordingly, it materially conflicts with Policy CS14 of the Council's Core Strategy 2010-2025 and Policy DP24 of its Development Policies 2010-2025, both of which form part of the Local Development Framework. These policies aim to ensure that new development respects its context and achieves the highest quality of design.
12. In reaching this conclusion, I accept that the proposal would make efficient use of the site and that it would improve the living conditions of its occupiers. A new ground floor bathroom and level access to the main house would make the enlarged house more suitable for occupiers that are less mobile. The windows of the main house would be replaced and its thermal performance upgraded. The inclusion of solar panels to reduce energy consumption is also to be welcomed. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm that I have identified. I also note the appellant's opinion that a larger single storey extension would be allowable as permitted development, which would reduce the amount of garden space further.
13. The Council raises no objection to the new dormer extension, which would be placed on the rear roof slope of the main house and facilitate the conversion of the roofspace to provide extra living accommodation. I, too, find this element of the appeal scheme acceptable, because it would be modest in scale, height and depth, and appropriate in position, design and appearance. It would not be out of keeping with the visual character of the existing property and those nearby. Accordingly, the new dormer extension would comply with the planning policies cited by the Council.
14. As this part of the development is clearly separable to the proposed side extension I am able to issue a split decision that grants planning permission solely for it. In doing so, I have attached a condition requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. In my opinion, it is important that the finished building should have a unified appearance with respect to the external materials used. The age of the building indicates that this can be most effectively achieved if samples are submitted for the Council's approval before work starts. A condition to this effect is imposed to ensure that the appearance of the dormer extension is satisfactory.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed in part and allowed in part.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR