



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2020

by **J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/D/20/3249459

15 Holly Lodge Gardens, London N6 6AA

- 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 Dr and Mrs H and E Buehler and Clarke against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2019/5357/P, dated 21 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 March 2020.
 - The development proposed was originally described as 'construction of part two and single storey rear extension, 2No single storey side extensions, roof alterations including addition of new portal windows to front gables and roof lights and replacement hard wood window frames and gates'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Dr and Mrs H and E Buehler and Clarke against the Council of the London Borough of Camden. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. While the description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form, amendments were made to the proposal through revised plans submitted to the Council prior to the determination of the application. The description on the Council's decision notice reflects these changes and describes the development as 'erection of a part two, part single storey rear extension, a single storey side extension on the eastern elevation and a part two, part single storey side extension on the western elevation, formation of crown roof extension, roof lights, replacement windows and gate, all following the demolition of the existing rear extensions and parts of the roof'. I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis.
4. As part of the appeal, the appellant has submitted an amended plan (drawing no 800.212D) which removes 2 second floor windows shown to the front of the building. This change reflects the arrangement already shown on the elevation drawings, and as I am satisfied that it would not prejudice the interests of any party, I have taken the amended plan into account in my decision.
5. I acknowledge concerns raised by the appellant that advice given by the Council was inconsistent and that no visit to the site took place prior to the

determination of the application. However, these matters do not alter my consideration of the planning merits of the proposal below.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal dwelling and the Holly Lodge Estate Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

7. The appeal relates to a detached dwelling within the Holly Lodge Estate CA. In accordance with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
8. Within the CA, the typically generous spacing around buildings, sizable landscaped gardens and wide streets lined by numerous mature trees result in an attractively spacious and verdant character. The Holly Lodge Estate Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2012 (CAAMS) also highlights the common architectural approach within the area in an English vernacular tradition, and notes that the scale of the houses is a key factor in defining the character of the CA. Together with the layout of buildings, these elements provide a distinctive homogeneity and a strong sense of place, from which much of the significance of the CA derives.
9. To the rear of the appeal dwelling are single and two-storey flat roof projections of varied depths, and a glazed conservatory which the main parties indicate are extensions. However, these elements are largely screened from the street scene by the existing and neighbouring buildings. To the front, the dwelling's exterior materials and detailing as well as features including the steeply pitched main roof, prominent chimneys and curved bays beneath distinctive front gables reflect those commonly found within the wider CA. For these reasons, I agree with the CAAMS that the appeal dwelling makes a positive contribution to the CA which adds to the CA's significance.
10. The extensions proposed to the rear of the dwelling would have a stepped footprint. At the deepest point, these would project a fairly small way beyond the existing deepest part of the dwelling. Even so, the appeal would still result in development some way beyond the relative sections of the existing stepped building line to the rear of the main dwelling. Cumulatively with the existing extensions, the proposal would result in a substantial projection at two-storey level beyond the dwelling, adding considerably to its overall bulk and mass with a significant physical presence. The increase would be exacerbated by the bulky gable roof forms above the sections at either side of the rear extensions. These would be higher than the existing rear part of the building, particularly closest to 14 Holly Lodge Gardens where the deep gable roof would be only a little below the height of the main ridge. At single-storey level, the existing lightweight glazed conservatory closest to 16 Holly Lodge Gardens would also be replaced by extensions of increased height and depth.
11. Further alterations are proposed to the main roof over the dwelling to create a flat roof section along with a slight increase over the existing ridge height. Although the appellant suggests that the Council does not object to this element of the proposal, the Council's report on the application clearly raises concerns over the effect of the roof alterations on the scale, proportions and

- architectural character of the building. The modification of the existing pitched form to a crown form would add considerably to the depth and overall bulk and mass of the main roof.
12. Taken together, the development over and above the existing additions would significantly increase the scale of the dwelling, and would combine to result in oversized and disproportionate additions which would dominate and overwhelm the more modest original form and proportions of the building.
 13. Moreover, while there are already flat-roof sections to both the appeal dwelling and neighbouring buildings, these are at ground or first floor level. The proposed flat section level with the new ridge of the host dwelling would be inconsistent with the predominantly pitched main roofs to individual dwellings within the CA. Compounding this, the varying heights and roof forms of the different sections of the rear extensions would result in an overly complex and discordant roof form, and the large expanses of glazing including full-height panes at first floor level would dominate the rear elevation. I agree with the appellant that the existing extensions on the site are somewhat ad-hoc and do not replicate the original building, but this does not justify larger unsympathetic extensions which would further diminish the character and appearance of the host building.
 14. The appellant suggests that part of the original building would be revealed by the glazed atrium element of the rear extension, but any benefit in this regard would be more than countered by the loss of the original main roof form. Similarly, while the small reduction in the height of the existing side projection closest to No 14 would bring it beneath the eaves of the main roof and offer some improvement in the separation between properties, this would not offset the overall substantial increase in the scale of the dwelling nor address the uncharacteristic nature of the development as a whole.
 15. I acknowledge that the extensions to the rear of the dwelling would not be readily apparent from the street scene. Nevertheless, the development would be plainly visible from neighbouring gardens and from the building to the rear which is at a much higher land level. There would also be opportunities for views of the uncharacteristic flat roof over the host dwelling from Holly Lodge Gardens. These views contribute to the character and appearance of the CA and are therefore important. In any case, as the CAAMS notes, while some rear extensions are not widely visible, they can so adversely affect the architectural integrity of the building to which they are attached that the character of the conservation area is prejudiced.
 16. The appellant has also drawn my attention to fairly large rear extensions to the neighbouring dwellings and some others nearby, but from the limited details provided, I do not know the circumstances which led to them being accepted. Besides, while they may have a similar footprint, I was not directed to any examples of comparable complex, multi-section extensions or alterations of main roofs to crown forms. Moreover, the existence of these extensions is not a compelling reason to allow development that would undermine the character and integrity of the building on the appeal site.
 17. I recognise that characteristic features and detailing to the front of the dwelling would be retained and the suggested use of materials to match the existing building. Nevertheless, for the reasons given above, the excessive and unsightly additions would cause harm to both the character and the

appearance of the appeal dwelling and consequently of the CA. It follows therefore that the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the CA.

18. Given the nature of the development and that the harm would be localised, I consider that less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA would occur. It is therefore necessary to weigh the public benefits of the proposal against this harm in accordance with Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The development would make effective use of the site and has been designed for energy efficiency, but these do not amount to public benefits sufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused to the CA, a matter to which I afford great weight.
19. Overall, the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the appeal dwelling and would fail to preserve or enhance the character and the appearance of the Holly Lodge Estate CA. Though it would comply with many individual criteria of policies within the development plan, the proposal would conflict with Policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 and Policies DH2, DH3 and DH4 of the Highgate Neighbourhood Plan 2017 (HNP) which require, amongst other things, high quality development which respects and complements the scale, proportions and character of buildings, streetscapes and areas, and which preserves and enhances heritage assets. Policy DH5 of the HNP is not cited as part of the reason for refusal but is referred to within the Council's report, and the proposal would be contrary to the requirement within this policy for roof extensions to respect the existing roof form.
20. There would also be conflict with guidance within the CAAMS which seeks development that preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the CA, and with Camden Planning Guidance Altering and Extending your Home 2019 which advises that development should be sympathetic to the character of buildings.

Conclusion

21. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole and there are no material considerations which indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR