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London NW6 2EE

Mr Michael Joyce
The Planning Inspectorate
Room 3/23
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

18th April 2023

Dear Mr Joyce

Ref: APP/X5210/W/22/3312937
Site address: 2 Hillfield Road, London NW6 1QE

Thank you for the opportunity to allow us to respond to the comments made by the case officer and the neighbours. I would like to reflect that Camden guidelines should be used as guidelines and should enable one to reflect according to the building and context of the surrounding area, it is not that every building needs to be moulded to fit the guidelines as I will explain, the guidelines should be there to assess, and other factors should also be assessed. We agree with the case officer conclusion (paragraph 1.5) that this might have been the first building on site as per our design and access statement, but this does not imply it was a grand building at the time as he states. Victorian buildings and Georgian building are predominantly built with different styles of sloped slate roofs and this house has a flat roof at the front which is odd at best. Perhaps the front is a later addition to the host building? Maybe the rear is the host building?

The case officer response refers to the host building 14 times and the rear needs to be subordinate, as a result we are emphasising the entire building is the host building. So above and below we are responding to the host building argument put forward by the case officer response.

The building is a two-story building, it was built without a subordinate rear projection or subordinate rear or rear wings as you often see in other Victorian houses in the area. The first floor is a lateral floor with no intermediate steps as you find with rear wings in Victorian houses. The entire building is the host building and should not be dissected (for exception of the c4sqm addition at the rear that consist of two floors which housed the bathrooms) and our recent extension on the ground floor. The entire first floor feels and flows as one main host building without any dropped ceiling and no part feels as a rear wing or outer rigger or secondary to the host building. We are not sure why the case officer calls it rear wings as it is one structure with two gable roofs connected with a small flat roof. Please visit the site.

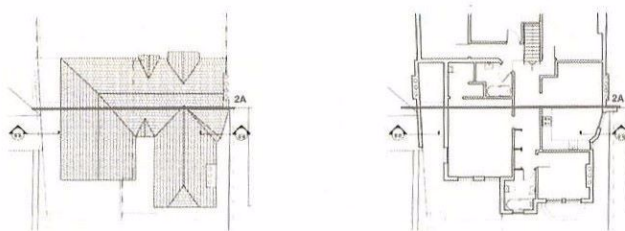
The main design is to raise another floor to the building, to create a second floor. We are raising the floor to the host building and created slopes so the second-floor extension would be relatively subordinate addition to the host building. By artificially dissecting the building and adding a pretend loft conversion we are artificially adding a partial one level host building to the front, so the front elevation blends in with the terrace but we believe the views to the rear does not look harmonise/uniform and as natural in both the approved and proposed application. If one projects the footprint of the approved rear dormer to the floor below it cuts a main bedroom and the kitchen room in the middle so, how can it be one part of a room is a host building and the other part of the room is a rear wing? It is clear the entire building is the host building and the current approved "loft conversion" is built partially

on the host building. Raising the entire host building will give the rear elevation a more natural look. We came up with two main designs and we completely understand it is subjective which one is more aesthetically acceptable. However, the two designs are completely different, one design is trying to show a transition to something modern to give/create a contrast and the other one is more of a traditional looking style. As the building was the first one in the plot and the building around it was added after, it seems odd that the second floor is referred as excessive in scale when it is not higher than the cottage next door and a cottage by definition is small.



As the case officer splits/cuts the building and states in Point 1.16 "the top of the proposed rear extension is the same height as the host building, making it excessively bulky and insubordinate, contrary to guidance" however currently the rear roof (gable roofs) is higher than the front as no roof is present. The front roof which is significantly set back is similar in height to one of the rear gables with the second rear gable slightly lower. So why is the rear being called an extension? Why is it wrong for the rear to be the same height when currently it is higher than the front? If the host building has to be higher then by this definition the current rear is the host building.

Furthermore, we opted for the dormer applications to align with 2A Hillfield Road. This alignment cuts through the house in a random manner. The case officer has taken this virtual line and decided the north side facing the road is the host building and the south side facing the garden is an extension. Then the case officer argument (repeatedly, ten times) that the rear needs to be subordinate to the host building. He even stated in paragraph 1.14 that the rear extension needs to terminate a story below the eaves.



It seems that dissecting the building enables the case officer to mould the guidelines to fit the guidelines that the rear needs to be subordinate to the host building. Or simply which is more likely the scenario the original loft application distracted the case officer, and then simply followed the conventional built of the Victorian houses in the area despite this house being built completely differently, maybe due to the fact being the first house.

We are consistently trying to push the boat with interesting design despite being constantly pushed back by the council. The case officer states in paragraph 1.8 "It is no part of the council's goal to impose consistency on the built environment" and in paragraph 1.5 he says "However, the absence of a pattern itself tells a story". The case officer even goes further in 1.5 "The flat roof to the front part and the side of the building is particularly intriguing" this all seems contradicting at best and brings us to

paragraph 1.31, the section from the previous appeal that the case officers refers to and copied below for ease of reference.

6. Whilst it is acknowledged that the principle of a roof extension is acceptable I find myself in agreement with the Council that the proposed mansard would be out of keeping with the design and appearance of the existing roof on the property and with the predominant form of pitched roofs on properties in Hillfield Road. I consider this incongruity would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and that the proposed mansard roof would not harmonise with the area generally. For these reasons although the proposal would add height to the building I do not believe this would be an acceptable way to do so.

We believe the mansard would have been a better solution as per paragraph 1.5 and 1.8 and a nice transition at the end of a terrace which tells a story but the appeal officer and the council wanted to keep it all uniformed and not as stated by the case officer in paragraph 1.8 “It is no part of the council’s goal to impose consistency on the built environment” and in paragraph 1.5 he says “However, the absence of a pattern itself tells a story” so the end result was that the story did get lost in the front of the building even though “particularly intriguing”. In fact, the mansard extension was designed lower than the approved new pitched roof and was lower than then the cottage.

We have taken on board the Inspector (appeal officer) comments and the council comments to keep things uniformed with a pitched roof to the front and we worked hard to come up with a more aesthetically pleasing outlook from Gondar Garden despite the outlook is very minimal. Please do walk up and down Gondar Garden and you will see the house has minimal impact on the overall views, also the house is set back from the road and will sit nicely in context with the surrounding buildings. In paragraph 1.17 the case officer, refers to a new building which he states it is not relevant but when you can see the house walking north on the west side of the pavement, you will also see the new building occupying most of the garden up the hill and hence why we thought it is relevant in context albeit it is further up but it will add mass and bulk.

With regards the case officer comment on the balcony, paragraph 1.20. A balcony on the first floor was approved and as stated on the design and access statement much larger roof terraces have been approved in the terrace. The position of the balconies will be hard to achieve any overlooking into the neighbours. Nevertheless, we submitted a revised drawings/options without the second-floor balcony to the case officer on 30.9.2022 as we have conceded for the balconies to be removed so we can achieve the planning.

We do not agree with the case officer that the views from Gondar Garden are harmful, have a large sheer wall especially in context with the surrounding buildings.

Full dormer

Due to the setting of the windows in the mansion block the case officer repeatedly refers to only to the views from Gondar Garden, and not mentioning once the Mansion block views. However, the application 2020/0760/P for a full dormer, will not be a visible from Gondar Garden. A full dormer will be more consistent with the pattern of other dormers on the terrace that are built from the ridge extending to the rear elevation flank wall and next door had two previous approved application for adding a loft room with a full dormer approved. So, we are at odds why this application is still being refused as the building is not listed or in conservation area and this extension does not have a visual impact so surely one expects it should be approved.

Furthermore, the smaller dormer designs are normally there to preserve the character of the original roof. The roof is not original so why preserve? If the smaller dormers where in keeping with the terrace one would understand but this is not the case and if implemented we will be the odd ones out in the

terrace. The new roof randomly cut through the house and has no relationship with the host building or the terrace at the rear, but we cannot explore an alternative design.

We agree with paragraph 1.7 that it is speculative if the neighbour will build it but in London it is highly likely to happen, especially on a small infill house, hence why the current owner applied twice for planning, as a rental investment we understand it is tricky to implement, but again we are speculating. Nevertheless, it was approved, and the prevailing pattern of the existing dormers are established.

Neighbours' comments

We feel the description of works is miss leading and raised unnecessary concerns to the neighbours, the application is called "Erection of part single part two storey rear extension and roof extension." as we are simply extending the roof.

The case officer agreed with the day light report that the development will not have an impact on amenity to the neighbours and the previous appeal officer was also in agreement which seems to be the main concerns. The case officer did not agree with the neighbours' concerns in regard to amenity.

Proposed planning Conditions.

We feel the condition is also an area of concern as why the case officer wants one of the windows on the first floor to be frosted? All the windows on the first floor are original windows. This also apply to the application of the full dormer, no relationship to the first floor. We cannot see which window will impact the neighbours, again guideline needs to be assessed if it is applicable to the current situation/context and has any impact.

Conclusion

It appears that case officer didn't fully appreciate the site and treated the house as other Victorian houses in the area with a main host building and outer rear wings without appreciating that the entire building is the host building.

Thank you for reviewing our response.

Adrian Ionescu

