



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2024

by N Teasdale BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/W/23/3335300

Units 8-9 Pratt Mews, Camden, London NW1 0AD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant full planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Leo Kaufman against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref is 2023/2881/P.
 - The development proposed is erection of an additional storey to 2 mews buildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. A number of computer-generated images have been submitted along with this appeal. Given that the images are for visual purposes only and do not alter the overall scheme, then I do not find these to be prejudicial to any party. I have therefore taken them into account in reaching a decision.
3. Interested parties raised concern regarding the address for the appeal site. At my site visit, I was satisfied that the appeal site relates to No 8-9 Pratt Mews as shown on the accompanying plans. I have determined the appeal accordingly on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue of the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area, including whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Camden Town Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises two properties, No 8 and No 9 Pratt Mews (No 8 and No 9). No 8 is a three-storey mews building and the adjoined No 9 is a two-storey mews building plus mansard. Both are part of the same terrace of buildings along the western side of Pratt Mews. The mews is located off Pratt Street (to the north) and is located in Camden Town Centre parallel to the high street. Both properties are visible from Pratt Mews as well as approaches along Pratt Street given their prominent position at the end of the mews.
6. The buildings are not listed but are in the CA, and No 9 is identified as being a positive contributor within the Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAAMS) as part of the group Nos 9-13 (consecutive). I have a duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and

Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. I have had regard to paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which explains that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

7. The CAAMS outlines the many diverse historic rooflines which are important to preserve and highlights that roof alterations and extensions can harm the historic character of the roofscape. It also states that the special character of the CA is vulnerable to erosion through, among other things, inappropriate change. While change is acknowledged as necessary, it is noted it must be managed so as to retain the distinctive and varied character. The document also explains that some, though not all, more modern development has been inappropriate, eroding the character and detracting from the townscape. These unsuccessful changes have particularly taken the form of inappropriate building massing, and detail, and poor choice and use of materials, with inadequate attention to the form and character of surrounding buildings.
8. Pratt Mews is one of the three mews that run between Bayham Street and the High Street and the CAAMS states that the predominantly two-storey buildings give the narrow passages their special scale. It is also noted that No 9 is identified as being a positive contributor within the CAAMS as part of the group Nos 9-13 (consecutive). Whilst the identification of the site as a positive building may not impose a statutory protection to the building, these are still humble properties in terms of height, all two storeys but No 9 which has a mansard, and they have group value in their scale and perception from the mews below. It is this strong mews character and grouping which forms part of the significance of this part of the CA.
9. The proposed development seeks permission for the erection of a mansard roof extension over both properties. As set out above, No 9 is currently two-storey in height but has an additional mansard storey which is set back slightly and not highly visible within the street scene. The two-storey appearance of the existing structure is an important aspect of the building as it represents the historic scale and continues the building height of the mews terrace in which it sits. The proposal would demolish the existing mansard roof and replace it with a brick storey, flush with the lower floors of the property, and an additional mansard roof extension on top – taking the building to four storeys in height.
10. No 8 Pratt Mews is a three-storey building and appears to mark the end of Pratt Mews. I observed that the buildings of the terrace gradually increase in height, reaching a peak to the south and then returning back to two and three storeys in the next mews, King's Terrace. The rhythm of this height increase and decrease creates a pleasing transition and allows the historic scale to remain the predominant feature of the mews which is that of two storey's with some additional mansard levels. The addition of an appropriately scaled mansard level is considered to respect and reference the historic scale, as the set-back and angled façade maintains a sense of subordination to the main façade. Such additions have not therefore significantly changed the character of the area whereby its two-storey buildings still give the narrow passage their special scale.

11. The buildings located further south or behind the appeal site have no bearing on the perceived scale of Pratt Mews as they do not form part of this particular row of buildings and thus are read differently when viewed as part of the street scene from Pratt Mews and Pratt Street.
12. The properties are already one storey higher than the adjacent two-storey properties and whilst this additional level is not considered harmful given the rhythm of the height increase to the south, any additional height and mass to the existing buildings would not be sympathetic to the scale of the mews which is a defining attribute of the mews typology. The result of the proposal would be a dominant addition that would compromise the historic character of the mews, harming the significance of this part of the CA. It would result in a sharp increase from the 2-storey building at No 10 Pratt Mews which would further exacerbate its overall harm and prominence.
13. I am aware of the appellants' claims in relation to taller buildings to the north at the entrance of Pratt Mews, these buildings are however located a further distance from the appeal site and are seen more in line with those properties located on the corner and along Pratt Street where the buildings are taller.
14. The adjacent property at No 10 was granted permission for a mansard roof level extension in 2017 under ref 2016/5942/P. This extension is understood to have however fit the modern character of the mews like the existing extension at No 9 being 2 storeys plus mansard. It is not therefore comparable to the scheme I am considering which is of a larger mass and height taking the building to four storeys in height. In any event, this scheme has not been built out and is understood to have expired having no bearing on the appeal. The building located opposite the appeal site 1-6 Regent House, is fairly new and has been built with respect to the mews typology, at 2 storeys plus a set-back mansard level. Such development is different to the appeal before me which for the above reasons is not considered to successfully protect the humble scale of the mews typology.
15. The appellant challenges the weight given to the CAAMS highlighting that the document has not been updated since publication in 2007. I have however also had due regard to local plan policies which requires development to respect local context and character whilst preserving and enhancing the historic environment and heritage assets which this appeal scheme does not. I am also aware of the Councils' claims that although the CAAMS was published some time ago, the mews does not appear to have significantly changed since then. Based on the evidence before me and my own observations onsite, I have no compelling reason to disagree with this. The main difference being the redevelopment of 1-6 Pratt Mews where the original two-storey mews buildings have been replaced with a building of very similar intimate scale being 2 storeys plus mansard. Even taking this development into account, the special sense of scale has been preserved. The CAAMS is therefore relevant in the particular circumstances of this case.
16. The mews may not experience high footfall and is not a throughfare, it may also not be identified as a protected vista in the CAAMS, but this would not justify the development which would have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area which is located within the CA. Further, the site is still clearly visible within the street scene and from a number of properties in the area.

17. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area. It would therefore fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA. Given the nature of the proposals, the harm is localised and is therefore less than substantial within the meaning of the Framework. Paragraph 208 of the Framework explains that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
18. The proposed development would introduce new residential floorspace in a highly sustainable location in need of more residential floorspace. The extent to which these matters are beneficial is however limited given the small-scale nature of the proposals. Overall, there are insufficient public benefits to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the CA that I have identified which I have attached great weight given the CA's conservation advised by the Framework.
19. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to Policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan, 2017 which together, amongst other matters, seek to secure high quality design in development and will preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas.

Other Matters

20. I am aware of the planning history associated with the site and changes made from previous schemes as well as claims made regarding materials proposed although this would not alter my findings in relation to the above main issue.

Conclusion

21. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole. There are no material considerations, either individually or in combination including the provisions of the Framework, that would outweigh the identified harm and associated plan conflict. I conclude that the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

N Teasdale

INSPECTOR