

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT 21/12/07

EXTENSION & ALTERATIONS AT 4 ROBIN GROVE, LONDON, N6 6NY

Context

4 Robin Grove is a 2 storey detached single family house located off Highgate West Hill in the Holly Lodge Estate. It is one of 4 houses built in 1924.

Although the houses form a distinct group they are all very different. The front elevations vary with projecting two storey bays that are either rectangular, angled or curved. The roofs are either hipped, or have gables brought forward or set back from the bays. The houses themselves are also set back from each other as the individual plots step up the hill.

The form of the houses in this group is unusual in the Holly Lodge Estate where the roofs are generally pitched and clad with plain tiles. The front sections are built with brick walls and characteristic pitched roofs clad in plain clay tiles. The walls of the rear section are also in brickwork but the roofs are flat slabs formed in a very unusual clinker construction, and are surrounded by parapets.

Roof extensions have been added recently to No 6 & No 8 Robin Grove. A significant single and two storey extension has also been added the side and rear of No 8 in a strikingly contemporary style. Nos 4 & 6 have single story conservatory extensions. All these additions have developed the diversity in appearance that is a characteristic of this group

Extensions and alterations have been carried out to houses in the adjoining streets of Hillway and Oakeshott Avenue, some of which are more and some less in keeping with the character of the area. New dormer windows 81 & 83 Hillway (see photos) are crude in design and bulky in appearance. The new glazed gables at 13 Oakeshott Avenue (see photo) and the recently approved (but not constructed) glazed gable at No 15 Oakeshott Avenue however are simple in detail and roof form that are sympathetic to the area.

Robin Grove is located in the Holly Lodge Estate Conservation Area. Relevant points in the Conservation Area Statement that relate to the alterations proposed in this application include;

'The scale of the houses.....is a key factor in defining the character...' of the area

'While there is a remarkable variety of detail and emphasis in the design of the different house types, the overall scale contributes to the harmony...'

While the majority of the roofs in the Estate are hipped a significant proportion are gabled. 'Accentuated gables' are noted as a feature of the bays in Robin Grove

The design of the proposals has taken account of the guidance on roof extensions given in Conservation Statement clauses HL23 & HL24, and Camden Planning Guidance Section 41 'Roofs and terraces' and in particular sub section 41.23 et seq 'Roof dormers and rooflights'

Consultation

The proposals in this application have been discussed and modified following a meeting with Agate Short Architects and Vanessa Ledra, the Duty Planning Officer on 11/12/07.

Objectives

The aim of the proposals is primarily to provide an additional bedroom and bathroom that are as large as possible within the geometry of the existing roof configuration and to keep the roof form as simple as possible

Other objectives are to replace the plastic windows to the south and east elevations with simple double glazed timber casements and to simplify the opening between the kitchen and garden

Design

The design extends the profile of the existing pitched roof to the front section of the house over the flat roof of the rear block. The planes of the north and south slopes are maintained and extended to form a new ridge running at right angles to the front. The new roof ends in a simple east facing gable. The geometry of the gable end maximises space internally and simplifies the insertion of dormer windows and avoids the complexity and limitations on space imposed by the geometry of a hipped end. Above all it achieves a simple roof form which is in harmony with the surrounding roofscape. Similar glazed gables have been approved very recently by the Council at 13 & 15 Oakeshott Avenue, adjoining Robin Grove

The examples of dormer windows shown in Camden Planning Guidance relate to front elevations but the Conservation Area Statement notes dormer are generally not acceptable in the Holly Lodge Estate. The dormers in this application have nonetheless been designed in accordance with the Council's recommendations in that they are well clear of ridges and hips, and where possible relate to but are subservient to windows below. The following points should also be noted in relation to the dormers:

- The new dormers are set well back from the front elevation behind chimney stacks on the north and south flank walls. Their impact on the front elevation will therefore be minimal
- the north facing dormer above the new staircase is aligned over the large window below and the new stair enclosure has been reduced in width to ensure the new window is subservient to the existing.
- the south elevation is very utilitarian in relation to the others, with small windows mostly onto ancillary not living spaces and not easily visible. It would therefore not be appropriate to take the width or position of these windows as the guide to the width and position of the new dormer above. The new window nonetheless uses casements that relate to the size of existing casements below but the overall size of the dormer relates to wider windows on the front and rear elevations and is in proportion to the large expanse of roof in which it sits.
- the new north facing dormer is located above an expanse of blank wall. The new window has therefore been designed to match the southern dormer so that it is in proportion to the roof

Access

These proposals involve works to the 2nd floor of an existing single family dwelling.

Conclusion

The Conservation Area Statement refers to the simplicity of house designs in the Holly Lodge Estate, also to the remarkable variety of detail and emphasis in the design of the different house types, and to the importance of scale and harmony. The alterations and extension in this application have been designed to reflect all these qualities so that the proposals will preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area