



# Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 10 October 2007

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

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Decision date:  
1 November 2007

## Appeal Refs: APP/X5210/E/07/2045541 & APP/X5210/A/07/2045542 74-77 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DA

- The appeals are made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent and under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeals are made by The Bedford Estates against the decisions of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
- The applications Ref 2007/1033/L and 2007/1033/P, dated 19 February 2007, were refused by notice dated 20 April 2007.
- The development proposed is a new mansard roof top addition to form office accommodation (B1 class).

### Preliminary matter

1. The Council's refusal notice lists the drawings submitted with the original application. Prior to the decision, a scheme incorporating an amended roof profile and lower lift overrun was the subject of discussions with Council officers and correspondence, resulting in a meeting on site to view a mock-up. A formal request to substitute certain of the application drawings was made on 30 March 2007. The substitution did not take place. I have considered the appeal proposal on the basis of drawing Nos. PP-001, 002, 003A, 103, 104, 105, 113, 114a, 115a, 200, 201a, 202, 300, 301a and 4.MH.01.

### Decisions

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2. I allow the appeal, and grant listed building consent for a new mansard roof top addition to form office accommodation (B1 class) at 74-77 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DA in accordance with the application Ref 2007/1033/L and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The works hereby authorised shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
  - 2) The works hereby approved shall not commence until detailed drawings (at a scale of not less than 1:20) of the new steel frame mountings; all dormers, windows and surrounds; and samples of new external materials, have been submitted to the local planning authority and approved in writing. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
  - 3) All new works and works of making good to the retained fabric, whether internal or external, shall be finished to match the original (or

adjacent) work with regard to the methods used and to material, colour, texture and profile (and in the case of brickwork, facework and pointing).

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3. I allow the appeal, and grant planning permission for a new mansard roof top addition to form office accommodation (B1 class) at 74-77 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DA in accordance with the application Ref 2007/1033/P and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
  - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match in colour and texture those used in the existing building, unless otherwise specified on the approved drawings.
  - 3) Before any plant and/or machinery is used on the roof, it shall be insulated, designed and mounted in a way which will minimise transmission of sound in accordance with a scheme to be approved in writing by the local planning authority.
  - 4) The level of noise at all times emitted from the plant and/or machinery hereby permitted shall not exceed a level 5 decibels below the existing background noise levels expressed in dB(A), as measured 1 metre from any neighbouring habitable rooms.

### **Reasons**

4. The Council accepts the principle of a mansard extension. A clay tiled roof extension already exists at the western end of the property facing Montague Street. The main issue is whether the proposed dormers, particularly those facing the road; and the introduction of roof plant items and the lift shaft overrun, are acceptable.
5. Due to commercial use, the original domestic character of the building which once comprised 4 terraced houses has been largely lost, including much of the internal layout and the chimney stacks that would have once projected above the roof. There is nothing remaining of the original pitched roofs except indications of their former existence on the party wall with No. 18 Bloomsbury Square. The existing flat asphalt roof is untypical of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as is the partial roof over the western end.
6. The existing building has a strong cornice and parapet line, a feature consistent with many other buildings in the conservation area. A slate mansard roof set well behind the parapet in the manner proposed would be out of sight from the footway adjacent to the building and hard to see from Bloomsbury Street or Montague Street. It would be visible above the existing façade seen from some parts of Bloomsbury Square, but the proposed dormers would be clad in lead and in my opinion the whole would be plain and subservient in character. Due to their location set back from the parapet by just under 1.5 metres, only the upper edges of the dormers would be seen above the balustrade from

- ground level. They would be relatively small and in proportion and would relate well to the composition of the façade.
7. Turning to the lift overrun and other alterations, an existing projecting stair enclosure would be removed. The new lift overrun would be somewhat larger but would be located well set back from the 'rear' of the building, facing the flank of No. 29b Montague Street. Here, in my view, its visual impact would be insignificant. The Council welcomes the restoration of a substantial length of the correct decorative parapet along much of this elevation and I agree. I consider that the new mansard roof would not diminish the architectural character or special interest of the building and would not conflict with the aims of policy B6 of the Camden Unitary Development Plan (UDP).
  8. With regard to the effect of the development on the conservation area, I noticed that traditional mansards of the type proposed are a common feature of many of the buildings in the locality, some of prominent appearance. Advice in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) including *Bloomsbury Conservation Area* and the *Draft Conservation Area Statement* recognises that mansard roofs are frequently the most practicable and least disruptive way of providing new space. Where they are considered unacceptable is described in detail in paragraphs 9.13 or BL49-50 of these documents, respectively. However, to my mind, none of the given situations apply to the appeal proposal to the extent necessary to satisfy me that this scheme would not be acceptable. There would be no noticeable harmful effect on the street scene generally or on views along Montague Street or Great Russell Street; or indeed from the windows of higher buildings in the vicinity. I conclude that the proposed mansard roof would preserve the character and appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area and would be in accordance with policies B1, B3 and B7 of the UDP and with the advice in SPG.
  9. I have taken into account all the other matters raised including the submission of a slightly revised scheme including raising the 'knee' of the mansard above the dormers. Whilst this approach would facilitate a continuous ridge to the mansard this would be difficult to perceive and would have no significant benefits over the submitted proposal. Neither this nor any other matter alters or outweighs the conclusions I have reached on the merits of the case.
  10. In addition to the time limitation of 3 years, conditions are necessary to ensure that the mounting of the new steel frames and the external appearance of the windows, dormers and the mansard itself are acceptable on this listed building and that the finish of work necessary for making good the fabric matches that existing. In the interests of reducing ambient noise levels generally and recognising the need for enforceability and precision, I have added a condition requiring the noise produced by plant and machinery on the roof to conform to a scheme to be approved by the local authority, together with a revised version of the suggested condition requiring the noise produced to be below the ambient noise level outside the windows to any neighbouring habitable rooms.

*Paul Jackson*

INSPECTOR