

Application Reference: 2014/0465/P - Flat 2, 4 Aberdare Gardens

GROUNDINGS OF APPEAL

Please note, as outlined below, I am happy to reduce the size of the proposed extension.

1. Reasoning behind proposal to enlarge the existing extension:

Flat 2, 4 Aberdare Gardens is currently approximately 1050 square feet in size, comprising **1 bedroom** and **2 bathrooms**, a very large lounge, and a further huge eat-in kitchen/living space. It benefits from a very generous garden (for a flat in this area). Despite its generous size, in its current state this flat can accommodate a couple at most.

Given the existing size of the flat and the generosity of the garden, *in its current configuration the flat represents a highly inefficient use of space*. With a modest enlargement of the existing extension, this flat could represent a far more efficient use of space and be inhabited by a far wider range of people.

2. Proposed new layout

The proposed new layout incorporates a second (double) bedroom, resulting in a **2 (double) bedroom, 2 bathroom** flat. *As such, it will comfortably accommodate a much larger range of people, including a small family with up to 2 children (who would especially welcome the access to private outside space), as well as non-couple adult sharers.*

In the proposed new layout, the kitchen, dining and living areas will be in the extension (currently approx 22ft (at longest point) x 15ft (at widest point)). In order to appropriately and comfortably accommodate a user-friendly kitchen, dining area and living space, this space needs to be a little larger. The proposed 3m extension would provide for a very comfortable, lovely space (while retaining a still-generous, proportionate garden). However, an additional 2m would also be sufficient to make this area user-friendly, well-designed and very livable (even for a family with children), and so I am happy to reduce the extension from 3m to 2m, if that is the only way to enable the proposal to be approved.

3. Design and Sustainability Considerations

The proposed new layout adheres strongly to the requirements of good design and the renovations taking place (whether incorporating the proposed extension or not) will significantly enhance the beauty, quality and sustainability of the property, in line with the spirit of DP 24 (*Securing High Quality Design*):

- All rooms including bathrooms are accessed from circulation spaces (i.e. no accessing a bedroom from the kitchen, no bathrooms opening onto other rooms).

- Both bedrooms have good proportions will have ample storage. Each bedroom will have built-in wardrobes, and also benefits from a substantial mezzanine space (created above the bathrooms), which can be used in various ways including storage.
- The flat as a whole will also have excellent storage and amenities, including a large coat cupboard by the entrance and a separate enclosed area for washer and dryer.
- Both bedrooms benefit from ample natural light and acoustic privacy.
- Acoustic ceiling insulation has been added to minimize noise from first floor flat.
- The new kitchen will be of a very user-friendly size and layout.
- Care is being taken to restore and maintain all original features, including removing some ugly mezzanine and restoring the original ceiling mouldings and maintaining original fireplaces.
- All building work, including materials and fixtures and fittings will be of a high standard, with an emphasis on natural materials wherever possible and high standards of insulation to ensure energy efficiency.
- The entire flat is being entirely re-wired and re-plumbed, to ensure compliance with highest current standards.
- The garden, which was badly neglected by the previous owner, will be carefully cleaned up.

It is notable in particular that the proposal is very much in line with Section 4 (Residential Development Standards) of CPG2 (*Housing*), the key message of which is “development should provide high quality housing that provides secure, well-lit accommodation that has well-designed layouts and rooms”).

4. Grounds for appeal

A. *Response to the Specific Points Raised in the Decision*

- Adding 3m to the existing extension would result in an extension which is approximately 60% of the length of the main building (measuring from the back wall of the main building). This extension therefore constitutes a “subordinate” structure, as required in CPG1 (Design), para 4.8 (in “Extensions, alterations and conservatories” chapter). The proposed extension would not therefore be an “over-dominant” nor “incongruous” addition to the parent building. (And I reiterate my willingness to accept a 2m extension – in which case the extension would be close to 50% of the length of the parent building.)
- The proposal is to add to an *existing* extension, in the same style as the existing extension. The *additional extension* is therefore not “incongruous” with the existing building - which already includes the existing extension - nor is it in itself “detrimental to the character and appearance of the parent building”.
- Similarly, the proposed extension would not be “incongruous” with the surrounding area, despite its status as a conservation area, since the use of ground floor extensions of this approximate size is, for better or worse, common in this area and this proposed extension will not stand out in

particular. It is especially worth noting that even if extended by the full 3m, the proposed extension would still be 2 – 3m shorter (and somewhat lower) than the extension next door at 6 Aberdare Gardens (and possibly other local extensions). I understand that other planning decisions do not necessarily set a precedent, and I raise this comparison with 6 Aberdare Gardens only in connection the question of incongruity with the surrounding area.

- To say that the proposed extension is detrimental to the character and appearance of the wider conservation area is to ignore the following:
 - a. neither the existing nor the proposed extension is visible from the street;
 - b. the proposed extension is an addition to an existing extension, and extends only its length: it is difficult therefore to accuse this proposed addition of, in itself, harming the appearance of the area;
 - c. the surrounding area is replete with similar and larger structures, in comparison which the proposed extension is unremarkable;
 - d. the proposed extension (even at the full 3m) does not affect any trees in the garden and allows the flat to retain an excellent, proportionate garden (approx 40 ft wide x 30 ft deep) with plenty of space for children’s play equipment; and
 - e. the proposed site of the extension is currently a concrete patio.

Some additional points are worth noting in the context of the grounds for refusal of the proposal:

- there is no loss of amenity to any neighbouring properties, nor any issues with creating views over any other properties;
- there were no objections to the proposal. (My neighbour at Flat 4, 4 Aberdare Gardens, who is on the top floor of the building and will overlook the extension specifically noted in his comments to the Council that he considers acceptable an extension which does not extend the existing patio - the proposed extension indeed does not extend beyond the existing patio.)

B. *Other Relevant Policy Considerations*

Any objections raised to the proposed extension, to the extent they are not already sufficiently rebutted by the representations in A above, have not been adequately balanced with certain other primary policy considerations.

Core Strategy 6 (*Providing Quality Homes*), as expanded in various Development Policies provides:

- the need to “make full use of Camden’s capacity for housing” in the context of demand for homes far outstripping supply (DP2 (*Meeting our need for homes*)), including more bedrooms per building;

- that “housing is regarded as the priority land-use of the Camden Local Development Framework, and the Council will make housing its top priority when considering the future of [...] underused land and buildings”. (DP2 (*Meeting our need for homes*); DP 2.8 notes that this policy does not override, but will be considered alongside, “the need for development to respect the characteristics of the area and the site or property”.)
- that the dwelling size priority identified by the Council for market housing in relation to 2-bedroom flats is “**very high**” with the aim for market housing being 40% 2-bedroom flats. (By comparison, its priority in relation to 1-bedroom flats is “**lower**”, and for 3-bedroom and larger flats “**medium**”.) (DP5 (*Homes of different sizes*))

The proposed extension, in supporting the conversion of a 1 bedroom, 2 bathroom flat into a 2 double-bedroom, 2 bathroom flat, in a manner which does not compromise good design and provides excellent livability (see Section 3 above), **directly supports these important priorities and proposals**. Given that the proposed extension (whether 2 or 3m) simply lengthens an existing extension without any adverse consequence to neighbours or views, retains a very substantial garden, and is not visible from the street, I submit that the Council’s decision has failed to give sufficient weight to these policies and priorities and that if it did, the proposal would be approved.

I am happy to answer any further questions you may have, and would welcome a site visit in order to be able to present in a concrete manner the submissions above.