
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 October 2014

by Paul Freer BA (Hons) LLM MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28 November 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/A/14/2224086
96 Queens Crescent, London NW5 4DY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Julietta Cochrane against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2014/2228/P, dated 27 January 2014, was refused by notice dated 9 June 2014.
 - The development proposed is described as a roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property forms part of a terrace of three-storey buildings on the south side of Queens Crescent, comprising of retail units on the ground floor with residential flats above. The buildings in this terrace are generally of similar appearance, although there are some differences in detail between the individual buildings. However, these minor differences do not undermine the overall cohesiveness of this terrace.
4. A significant component of this cohesiveness is derived from the continuous and uniform parapet line. There are, I accept, some very minor variations in the height of this parapet throughout its length, as well as some minor differences in detailing. Nonetheless, these minor variations are not significant and the predominant characteristic of these properties is the absence of built form above a continuous and uniform parapet line.
5. The proposed roof extension would project significantly above this parapet line. This would be very evident when viewed from Ashdown Crescent directly opposite and, in my judgment, as well as in longer views of this terrace from either side. The proposed roof extension would therefore disrupt the cohesiveness of this terrace, and would detract from this distinctive and important aspect of its character. The proposed roof extension would therefore appear as an incongruous and intrusive element in the street scene, and as such would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

6. With the exception of the property neighbouring the appeal site, No 94, all of the buildings in this terrace retain the valley roof. I accept that the proposed roof extension would only be visible in glimpsed views from Weedington Road. At the time of my site inspection, the valley roof of the appeal property was clearly visible from Allcroft Road and the footpath leading to the block of flats ('Edington'), although I accept that the extent to which the appeal proposal would be visible from these locations would be reduced following completion of the development currently under construction on the intervening site.
7. However, the restricted visibility of the rear of the proposed roof extension would not negate the loss of the important feature of the valley roof. Neither would it negate the fact that the front of the proposed roof extension would be clearly visible as a result of its significant projection above the parapet, nor the harm that this would cause to the distinctive character of this terrace.
8. I accept that there is a considerable variation in roofline in the vicinity of the appeal site and that, particularly in views from the grounds of the flats north of Ashdown Crescent, the appeal proposal would be viewed behind a foreground in which roof extensions form part of the street scene. However, the important distinction is that the terrace of which the appeal site forms a part is devoid of built form above the parapet line. Consequently, whereas roof extensions form part of the character in other locations, the character and distinctiveness of this particular terrace is defined in large part by the absence of roof extensions. It follows that the presence of roof extensions in the wider street scene does not provide justification for the appeal proposal.
9. I conclude that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be contrary to Policy CS14 of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Policy DP24 of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework Development Policies. Amongst other things, these policies require that all developments, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, should be of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character, and respect the character of the existing building.
10. I accept that the proposed roof extension would comply with some technical aspects of the Camden Planning Guidance Design (CPG1) in terms of the design of Mansard roofs. However, for the reasons set out above, it would fail to accord with the overall principle set out in this guidance that roof extensions are likely to be unacceptable where complete terraces have a roof line that is largely unimpaired by alterations or extensions. In my view, this applies equally where a terrace has a continuous and uniform parapet line.

Other Matters

11. I acknowledge that the residential flat as proposed to be enlarged would contribute towards the choice of housing in the Borough. However, I am not convinced that the proposal would provide accommodation to the standards required for a four-person two-bedroom dwelling. Furthermore, I have been provided with no evidence to support the appellant's contention that the proposed development would provide accommodation identified as being of high priority in the Camden Planning Guidance Housing (CPG2) which, on the basis of the extract provided to me, appears to be partly based on affordability. Consequently, the benefit in terms of the contribution towards housing choice

resulting from the appeal proposal would be outweighed by the harm to the wider character and appearance of the area

12. I have had careful regard to the concerns raised by the proprietor of the photographic studio at No 129a Weedington Road in relation to light and privacy, and I was able to view the appeal site from within that property as part of my site inspection. However, whilst I understand the concerns raised in terms of the operation of the photographic studio, the additional windows in the proposed roof extension facing onto this property would serve a bedroom and a landing. Given that any overlooking of the photographic studio would require the occupiers to actively look downwards through the glazed roof, I am satisfied that the normal use of the bedroom and landing served by these windows would not result in an unacceptable degree of overlooking of the photographic studio.
13. The proposed roof extension would be clearly visible through the glazed roof over the photographic studio. However, because of the separation distance, I am satisfied that the proposed roof extension would not result in a significant loss of light to the photographic studio.

Conclusion

14. I have had regard to all other matters raised, including the appellant's contention that the appeal proposal represents a sustainable form of development and that, in accordance with paragraph 65 the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), planning permission should not be refused because of any incompatibility with an existing townscape. However, the provisions of paragraph 65 of the Framework are subject to any concerns in relation to the existing townscape being mitigated by good design. The Framework also confirms that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. For the reasons set out above, the proposed development would not constitute good design and would fail to accord with the importance attached to good design in the Framework. Consequently, the proposed development would not represent a sustainable form of development and would not benefit from the provision within paragraph 65 the Framework.
15. Accordingly, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Freer

INSPECTOR