

## STATEMENT OF CASE

### **Planning application 2015/2696/P**

Planning permission already exists for a loft extension at 17 Edis Street with two dormer windows on the front elevation and a mansard roof on the rear. Therefore it is clear that the principle of development, that is to construct a loft extension, is not in question.

Having been engaged as Architects by our client we proposed amending the design of the loft space to give a better layout and to include some much needed external amenity space at roof level. (Outside amenity spaces are encouraged both by the council and by the mayor of London).

Most of the houses in Primrose Hill have loft extensions and the vast majority of those with loft extensions have a roof terrace. Interestingly, or maybe as expected, the roof terraces are positioned to catch the southern sun. The majority of houses on the northern sides of Gloucester Avenue and Chalcot Road have terraces overlooking the street (If you go onto Google Earth you can clearly see all the roof terraces). The houses on the southern side of the street have roof terraces on the garden sides, again facing the sun, with a mixture of dormer windows and skylight on roof overlooking the street.

Most of the houses in Primrose Hill have small gardens and half of them, because they are on the north side of the house, get very little sun. It is therefore understandable that, over the past 80 or so years, the residents have been constructing roof terraces so that they can sit in and enjoy the midday and afternoon sun.

The house at 17 Edis Street has a small north facing garden that only gets morning sunshine in the summer, for the rest of the year it is in shade. The roof terrace, connected directly to the loft space with large minimal framed sliding windows, will create a most needed south/west facing space.

The roof terrace will not affect the neighbour's amenity in any way but will significantly improve the living conditions of our clients.

We have submitted planning permission for a very simple roof extension. On the back, the garden side, is a simple dormer window (reduced in size after feedback from Camden's planning officer) and on the South side a small terrace and full height sliding doors.

We have made the terrace as wide as possible, any wider and it would have made the room too small and unusable, and have, as the request of Camden, lined up the sides of the windows with the sash windows of the first floor windows.

Even with these changes, made at Camden's request, they have turned down the planning application because they consider that the extension harms the host property and is not in keeping with the nature of the conservation area. Camden notes in 3.10 "*On Balance, the proposal is considered unacceptable by virtue of the detailed design of the front elevation, the creation of a roof terrace to the front and the materials, which result in an unsympathetic addition which does not preserve or enhance the character of the host property or the wider Primrose Hill conservation area. Although the proposal would be set back from the front elevation which would limit some of its visibility from the street level, it is considered that the proposal would be visible from the public realm by virtue of long views*"

In making this decision we do not consider that the council have not made an accurate assessment of the nature of this particular part of the conservation area, and question how they can decide on this application without doing so.

In the Delegated report the officer notes in 3.5 that *“Although the surrounding street is characterized by a variety of different sizes and style and roof extensions, these are all historical developments which were approved, on the whole, in the 1970’s to 1990’. Many years before the current local development Framework was adopted in 2010”*

We contend that all the existing build form has to be taken in to consideration when assessing the nature of the conservation area and neither the council nor ourselves can pick and choose what to include and what to exclude. Yes the majority of the existing roof extensions were built before the local development framework was adopted in 2010 as were the majority of the houses/ buildings in the conversation area. Are the council suggesting that everything built before 2010 cannot be considered as part of the conservation area?

London, is a vibrant living city and the architecture of this city is as much characterized by the alterations and additions as by the ‘original’ buildings. It is the quiriness of these additions set in juxtaposition with the original buildings which is often inspiring and interesting. London is not a city set in aspic, it is a growing and ever changing metropolitan hub, with the pattern of development reflecting the aspirations and needs of its inhabitants.

Therefore if it is agreed that the roof extensions built before 2010 cannot be dismissed as not forming part of the nature of the conservation area then we would suggest that the nature of the conservation area could be summarized as follows:

“Streets lined with houses with uniform facades up to pediment level with a roof extensions in a variety of styles above parapet level. The one pattern of development which characterizes the roof extensions is that they are all built to take full advantage of the sun, with terraces always on the south side of the building. The rear of the buildings are layered with alterations and additions which reflect the aspiration wealth and requirements of the inhabitants”

If it is agreed that this is an accurate description of this particular part of the conservation area (and it is our opinion that the photos submitted with this statement of case demonstrate that it is ) then it we contend that it cannot be argued that the proposed extension is either harmful to the host building nor out of keeping with or detrimental to, this part of the conservation area.

We agree that there are some parts of the conservation area where a roof extension similar to the one we are proposing, would be out of keeping with the pre dominant form of roof terrace. For instance on Fitzroy road there are identical roof extensions with dormer windows over-looking the street. Although they are not original these dormers they do give a pleasant uniformity to the roof scape of in this part of the conservation area and it would be out keeping to have a flat roof extension with a terrace popping up amongst them.

The roof scape on Edis Street in contrast to Fitzroy road, is made up of an ad hoc mixture roof extensions – no two are the same. No.16 has a flat roof extension and terrace, no.18 has a pitched roof, no.19 a setback extension with a terrace. This pattern of development continues all along the street on both sides of the road. So it can be argued, with conviction, that the eclectic roof extensions actually form part of the character of this part of the conservation area.

In 3.6 of the delegated Camden agree that roof extension at 12, 16, 24 and 26 are similar to the one proposed for 17 Edis street but dismiss these as they were built in the 1970’s and 1980’s and because they think that they are unattractive developments – even though they are not called out in an the conservation area statement as being so. The council cannot simply pick and chose what to include and exclude from the conservation area. These roof extensions form part of the conservation area. Further in point 3.6 the Camden notes that the ‘more traditional’ mansard roof extensions with either two front dormer window or two Velux style skylights make up the majority of roof extensions. This is incorrect. It is true that there is a higgledy-piggledy mix of mansard roofs dormer and skylights

on the North side of Gloucester Avenue and Chalcot road because the terraces are on the south / garden elevation but on the side of Gloucester Avenue and Chalcot road all the roof extensions are set back with roof terraces.

The only place in the conservation area where there are uniform dormer windows overlooking the street is on Fitzroy road.

Camden have suggested ( in email correspondence ) that the south facing roof terrace at 17 Edis street is acceptable and that the extension would be acceptable if the proposed sliding door was divided into two in order to mimic the proportions of the windows on the façade below and to appear like dormers when viewed from below. Camden writes in 1.4 of the delegated report “ *At the front, it was suggested that the proposal was amended by either increasing the set back from the front; introducing two smaller distinct smaller openings in the front elevation ( that would appear as the tops of the two small dormers from the street); or provide a traditional mansard roof to the front*”

The windows cannot be set back any further ( the room would become un- useable) and as Architects we do not consider that dividing the window up to look like dormers when viewed from below is the correct architectural response, indeed we consider Camden’s recommendation to be counter to guidelines from English Heritage and CABE. These guidelines advise that “*One of the most common problems in conservation areas is the lack of understanding by many developers and/or designers of the urban context, resulting in crude or debased imitations of adjoining buildings, or token gestures towards the local architectural style. Where the character of the area derives from its diversity, the imposition of imitative or ‘in keeping with existing’ styles runs counter to the way in which the area has traditionally evolved”* and add that “ *Thoughtless haste on the one hand and ill-considered imitation on the other have both over the years damaged the fabric of our historic towns and cities. But there is another way, in the form of buildings that are recognisably of our age while understanding and respecting history and context.*”

The National trust and The Landmark Trusts approach to additions also follows these guidelines. Both of these organisations insist that when adding on to an historic building what is original and what is existing needs to be made clear. For instance at the Morden Park Visitors centre in South London The National Trust specified large contemporary minimal framed sliding windows from Vitrocsa to enclose an existing barn rather than ‘traditional’ timber windows. The National Trust wanted to make it apparent what was original and what was new. Likewise the Landmarks Trust’s Astley Castle, which won the Stirling prize, is and an endorsement of an approach in which imaginative contemporary architecture has been woven into the fabric of an outstanding ruined structure. “Astley shows that working with historic buildings doesn’t just have to be about repair or reinstatement. It can be a reinvention or reimagining, making something richer and more engaging than what was there before”.

So it seems misguided that when English Heritage, CABE, the National trust and The Landmark trust encourage contemporary extensions to historic listed building which are carefully considered but recognisably of the age that Camden are insisting that extension includes a debased imitation of dormer window.

Paul+O architects are known for designing contemporary buildings and extensions which are sympathetic to their surroundings. Our work, which is both contextual and contemporary, is very considered and carefully detailed and has won numerous awards.

The proposed roof extension for 17 Edis street is also carefully considered and detailed. The extension is contemporary, it is of our time, it is not trying to look like it is part of the original building but it is sympathetic to it . It is similar in form to the majority of other roof extensions in the area but it more lightweight and elegant in its detailing. The extension sits back from the line of the parapet, which at 1100m high acts as balustrade, and is fronted with contemporary minimal framed windows ( the same windows as were specified by the National Trust for the Visitors centre at Morden Hall). The mullions of these windows is only 18mm wide so they are more in keeping with original Victorian windows than new chunky timber framed double glazed windows would be.

All the passer by on the pavement below would see of the roof extension at 17 Edis street would be the top of the parapet - just like the existing roof terraces Gloucester Avenue ( pictures attached). Camden claims that the extension would be seen by passer by “ by virtue of the long views”. We do not think this is the case as this street is narrower than Gloucester Avenue but even if you could see it we do not think this is a reason for not granting planning permission. The neighbours opposite will see the top 11500mm ( the rest is concealed behind the parapet) of the roof extension from their own roof extension and I think lucky them as this well design and carefully detailed roof extension will be a joy to look at. But generally it will only be visible on google earth.

The Primrose Hill Conservation Area Advisory Committee wrote to the council at the time of the application noting that they would “ *Prefer to see the front elevation designed to follow the dominant forms of the front elevation, that is a pair of windows at roof extension level following the pattern of the original front elevation*”.

As pointed out already the dominant form of roof extension is not a pair of dormer windows but an eclectic mix of roof extensions that are distinct from the originals building. Not only do dormer windows form part of the architectural language of these Victorian terrace houses when installed it is unclear what is original and what is a later addition – again contrary to English Heritage guidelines.

In conclusion:

1. There are no Amenity issues so the only question which needs answering is whether the proposed extension is harmful to host building or detrimental to the conservation area.
2. To ascertain this one first has to establish what the nature of this part of the conservation area is.
3. Just because the majority of the extensions were built before 2010 does allow the council to Ignore / dismiss then making an assessment of the conservation area.
4. This conservation area is typified by an eclectic mix of roof extensions and south facing terraces. The proposed extension add to this pattern of development.
5. The extension is contemporary but there is no policy which precludes cotemporary extensions being built in a conservation area, indeed English heritage / CABEe encourages it and the London plan wards against stifling innovation.
6. The extension is in line with Camden's CPGI ( design) Paragraph 5.7.
7. The extension is on line with the Primrose Hill CSA which states that where a roof application is acceptable, the type of roof extension likely to be acceptable depends on the existing roof form and the predominant for of extension within a building group.
8. The extension is of a high quality of design, it will create 'high quality space' for the inhabitants as well as much needed external space – The proposal is there therefore in line with CS14, DP24 and DP25.

The planning officer had advised us on 30th July ,via email, that she had written up the report recommending approval. She then wrote on 1<sup>st</sup> September advising that she had “presented the proposal to two of our moderating officers and neither are able to support the application or recommend it for approval. Although there a few roof extensions along the street which are similar in appearance; as they are all historic they cannot set a precedent for future development. There are a number of CPG-compliant mansard roof extensions on the street, and this is the direction the council would wish to see future development take. I have checked the history of the more recent applications approved on Edis Street and they all follow the more traditional design on a mansard roof extension with two front dormers”.

It is our opinion that the moderating officers opinion goes against Camden's own policy.

We would therefore request that the planning inspector grant planning permission.

