
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2015

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11 August 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/W/15/3011208
13 Doughty Mews, London WC1N 2PG

- 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 Mr Robert Turner against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2014/2238/P, dated 30 March 2014, was refused by notice dated 1 December 2014.
 - The development proposed is to demolish existing roof and construct new roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The proposal is to demolish and remove the existing roof and erect a new roof extension with raised parapet walls and chimneystacks at each side. At the front, full length glazed doors would provide access from the new extension to a short terrace at roof level. A similar proposal at the attached property, 14 Doughty Mews, is also before me to determine. Given the similarity in the issues raised by the two proposals, I have assessed the development sought individually and in combination with the scheme at No 14.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development, on its own and together with a similar proposal at 14 Doughty Mews, on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a mid-terrace 2-storey building that faces Doughty Mews. The upper part of the appeal building and that of No 14 appear to be largely externally unaltered. With a shallow pitched roof, a relatively low ridgeline and front parapet, there is a visually strong horizontal emphasis to the upper front elevation of both Nos 13 and 14. From what I saw, other properties in the terrace to which No 13 belongs vary in their height, materials and pattern of fenestration.
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5. The appeal property falls within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, (CA). The CA covers a wide area. In my opinion, it derives its significance as a heritage asset partly from the inter-related grid of streets, formal landscaped squares and from the classical architectural styles of buildings regardless of their period or scale. The Council's CA Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAAMS) notes that while pressure for change has led to many of the original mews buildings being replaced, Doughty Mews and the northern end of Brownlow Mews arguably contain the best surviving examples of original mews buildings although many have been altered. Like several buildings along both sides of Doughty Mews, the CAAMS identifies Nos 13 and 14 as positive contributors to the CA. I concur with that assessment.
6. As the appellant points out, a significant number of properties along both sides of Doughty Mews have been extended at roof level. I am unaware of the detailed circumstances of these cases. From what I saw, these examples have blended into the visual character of the local area and respected the appearance and qualities of the host building with varying degrees of success. To my mind, these examples serve to illustrate that even modest changes at roof level can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the host building and the local street scene to which it belongs.
7. In this case, the new addition would extend across the full width of the property, significantly adding to its scale and mass at roof level. As a result, the roof of No 13 would significantly gain prominence in the street scene. To my mind, the 3-storey front elevation with a sizeable roof element would undermine the architectural style of the host building even taking into account the set back of the roof extension from the front wall. To some degree, the modern style of new windows would also contrast with and so draw the eye away from the line of first floor front windows, which is a distinctive feature of the façade and may be a feature of the building's original design. By visually competing with and thus detracting from the pattern of fenestration, the proposal would spoil the building's attractive front elevation. The new roof level addition at No 14 would do likewise.
8. Therefore, I consider that the proposal, individually and collectively with the roof level extension proposed at No 14, would be an unwelcome addition to the host building and the local area. By causing material harm to the character and appearance of the host building, the appeal scheme would diminish the positive contribution of No 13 to the character of CA. Therefore, it would have a deleterious effect on the character and appearance of the CA, which would fail to be preserved.
9. The CAAMS notes that roof alterations or additions are likely to be unacceptable where a building forms part of a complete terrace which has a roof line that is largely unimpaired by alterations or extensions and where the architectural style would be undermined by any addition. That would be the case with the proposal before me.
10. While public views of the new roof extension would be limited to relatively short sections of Doughty Mews, it would also be visible from the upper floors of nearby buildings. In any event, the requirement for development to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA applies with equal force whether or not the proposal is prominent or available to public view.

11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is clear on the importance of high quality design and the need to respond to local character. It also states that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a conservation area, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Although the harm to the CA would be less than substantial in this case, I am not persuaded that the public benefits of the development, primarily through the support given to the local economy would outweigh this harm.
12. Overall, I conclude on the main issue that the proposal, taken individually and in combination with a similar scheme at No 14, would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policy CS14 of the Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025 and Policies DP24 and DP25 of the Camden Development Policies 2010-2025, which form part of the Council's Local Development Framework. These policies aim to ensure that new development is of the highest standard of design, respects its local context and character, and preserves or enhances Camden's heritage assets including conservation areas.
13. There would also be a conflict with the Framework regarding the protection of heritage assets such as conservation areas, and with the statutory duty. This duty requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
14. The proposal would provide additional living accommodation that would improve the living conditions for the occupiers of No 13. It would also make efficient use of the appeal property in a location that is highly accessible by public transport. The Framework encourages all of these matters. However, these considerations do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
15. The Council also considers that the proposal, if permitted, would set an undesirable precedent. However, I disagree. Each case should be assessed on its own merits, as I have done in this instance.

Conclusion

16. Overall, for the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2015

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11 August 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/W/15/3011212
14 Doughty Mews, London WC1N 2PG

- 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 Mr John Mason against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2014/2239/P, dated 30 March 2014, was refused by notice dated 1 December 2014.
 - The development proposed is to remove existing roof and construct new second floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The proposal is to demolish and remove the existing roof and erect a new roof extension with raised parapet walls at each side. At the front, full length glazed doors would provide access from the new extension to a short terrace at roof level. A similar proposal at the attached property, 13 Doughty Mews, is also before me to determine. Given the similarity in the issues raised by the two proposals, I have assessed the development sought individually and in combination with the scheme at No 13.

Main issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on its own and together with a similar proposal at 13 Doughty Mews on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area and on the living conditions of the occupiers of 11 Guilford Street, with particular regard to light.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is an end-terrace 2-storey building that faces Doughty Mews. The upper part of the appeal building and that of No 13 appear to be largely externally unaltered. With a shallow dual pitched roof, a relatively low ridgeline and front parapet there is a visually strong horizontal emphasis to the upper front elevation of both Nos 13 and 14. From what I saw, other properties in the terrace to which No 14 belongs vary in their height, materials and pattern of fenestration.
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5. The appeal property falls within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, (CA). The CA covers a wide area. In my opinion, it derives its significance as a heritage asset partly from the inter-related grid of streets, formal landscaped squares and from the classical architectural styles of buildings regardless of their period or scale. The Council's CA Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAAMS) notes that while pressure for change has led to many of the original mews buildings being replaced, Doughty Mews and the northern end of Brownlow Mews arguably contain the best surviving examples of original mews buildings although many have been altered. Like several buildings along both sides of Doughty Mews, the CAAMS identifies Nos 13 and 14 as positive contributors to the CA. I concur with that assessment.
6. As the appellant points out, a significant number of properties along both sides of Doughty Mews have been extended at roof level. I am unaware of the detailed circumstances of these cases. From what I saw, these examples have blended into the visual character of the local area and respected the appearance and qualities of the host building with varying degrees of success. To my mind, these examples serve to illustrate that even modest changes at roof level can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the host building and the local street scene to which it belongs.
7. In this case, the new addition would extend across the full width of the property, significantly adding to its scale and mass at roof level. As a result, the roof of No 14 would significantly gain prominence in the street scene. To my mind, the 3-storey front elevation with a sizeable roof element would undermine the architectural style of the host building even taking into account the set back of the roof extension from the front wall. To some degree, the modern style of new windows would also contrast with and so draw the eye away from the line of first floor front windows, which is a distinctive feature of the façade and may be a feature of the building's original design. By visually competing with and thus detracting from the pattern of fenestration, the proposal would spoil the building's attractive front elevation. The new roof level addition at No 13 would do likewise.
8. Therefore, I consider that the proposal, individually and collectively with the roof level extension proposed at No 13, would be an unwelcome addition to the host building and the local area. By causing material harm to the character and appearance of the host building, the appeal scheme would diminish the positive contribution of No 14 to the CA. It would have a deleterious effect on the character and appearance of the CA, which would fail to be preserved.
9. While views from public vantage points of the new roof extension would be limited to relatively short sections of Doughty Mews, it would also be visible from the upper floors of nearby buildings. In any event, the requirement for development to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA applies with equal force whether or not the proposal is prominent or available to public view.
10. The CAAMS notes that roof alterations or additions are likely to be unacceptable where a building forms part of a complete terrace which has a roof line that is largely unimpaired by alterations or extensions and where the architectural style would be undermined by any addition. That would be the case with the proposal before me.

11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a conservation area, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Although the harm to the CA would be less than substantial in this case, I am not persuaded that the public benefits of the development, primarily through the support given to the local economy, would outweigh this harm.
12. Overall, I conclude on the main issue that the proposal, taken individually and in combination with a similar scheme at No 13 would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policy CS14 of the Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025 (CS) and Policies DP24 and DP25 of the Camden Development Policies 2010-2025 (CDP), which form part of the Council's Local Development Framework. These policies aim to ensure that new development is of the highest standard of design, respects its local context and character, and preserves or enhances Camden's heritage assets including conservation areas.
13. The development is also at odds with a core principle of the Framework, which is to always seek to secure high quality design. There would also be a conflict with the Framework regarding the protection of heritage assets such as conservation areas, and with the statutory duty. This duty requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Living conditions

14. There would be some loss of sunlight and daylight to the rear-facing windows of 11 Guilford Place, which is a tall building in use as flats that stands roughly at right angles to the side of No 14. That loss would be mainly caused by the overshadowing effect of the sidewall of No 14, which would be raised in height by about 1.5-metres.
15. From what I saw, it is the lower level rear windows of No 11 that are likely to most be affected given the elevated position of the proposal in relation to them. However, the existing buildings at the rear of No 11 and the flank wall of No 14 itself would already influence the amount of light reaching the rooms served by these windows. In that context, I am not convinced that the additional loss of light primarily caused by the raised height of the sidewall of No 14 would be appreciable.
16. Consequently, I find that there would be no significant harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 11. Accordingly, there is no material conflict with CS Policy CS5 and CDP Policy DP26 insofar as they aim to safeguard residential amenity.

Other matters

17. The proposal would provide additional living accommodation that would improve the living conditions for the occupiers of No 14. It would also make efficient use of the appeal property in a location that is highly accessible by public transport. The Framework encourages all of these matters. However, these considerations do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.

18. The Council also considers that the proposal, if permitted, would set an undesirable precedent. However, I disagree. Each case should be assessed on its own merits, as I have done in this instance.

Conclusion

19. Overall, for the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR