Eton

Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Advice from Eton Conservation Area Advisory Committee: 29.11.2017

Re 14 Eton Road: 2017/5616/P

We have the following observations on the alterations proposed for 14 Eton Road.

The intention is to increase and improve the accommodation on the Lower Ground Floor by infilling the side passage with a single storey side extension and constructing a single storey rear extension, and to demolish and rebuild the existing garden room. Viewed as a whole the proposals do seem somewhat at odds with what is expected in a Conservation Area: in that the overriding consideration should be that alterations and extensions are in harmony with the original form and character of the house and that any development preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposals are also out of line with Camden''s own Design Planning Guidance.

Side Extension

Number 14 Eton Road is one of a series of large semi detached Victorian villas on the north side of the road. There is a particular harmony in the gaps between these houses which the imposition of a side extension will inevitably disrupt. The Eton Conservation Area Statement contains a specific reference to the dangers of this in its Guidelines - ET 38, page 30. Camden''s Design Planning Guidance contains similar sentiments - CPG 1, 4.17, page 30.

Rear Extension

We have no objection in principle to the addition of rear extensions in the Conservation Area. But we strongly support the statement in Camden''s Design Guidance; that "they respect and preserve the original design and proportions of the building, including its architectural period and style" - CPG1, 4.10, page 29. The Guidelines in the Conservation Area Statement takes a similar view: that "Rear extensions should be as unobtrusive as possible and should not adversely affect the character of the building or the Conservation Area". ET 22, page 28. Should this extension not be made more subordinate to the existing house?

Garden Room

If this were an application to construct a new building in the rear garden we have no doubt that the Council would find it unacceptable in a Conservation Area. However, the presence of an existing building requires a different approach.

In this application the rear garden is to be lowered to various levels. Where the proposed garden building will stand it is to be lowered by 1.735 m, which is a really considerable figure. Yet despite such a lowering of level, the new garden building is, in part, to be the same height as the old one, which, as indicated above, is a building that would not be permitted now that the area has conservation status. While acknowledging the rights established by the garden building that is about to be demolished, retaining its height seems insensitive in this particular context. And although the sloping sedum roof is clearly intended as an ameliorating element, the overall design is that of a too bulky bunker-like presence in the garden - see Proposed Garden Section. The design of this building puts much emphasis on the sedum roof, but green roofs do not guarantee integration within a context such as this if the design as a whole has a different thrust: and, in these respects, this is the case here.

Rear gardens such as these on Eton Road are a most particular feature of this conservation area and this city - and we know, as a CAAC, that they are under threat, and easily eroded.

We realise that the existing building makes this a rather unusual case, and that alterations have been made following pre-application. Nevertheless, we think further modifications should be very seriously considered, based on the points above.