

Heritage, Planning and Design & Access Statement

March 2018

Introduction

1. This Statement accompanies a planning application to the LB Camden for a rear infill of an existing closet wing at upper floor level to serve the existing flat at the property. The property was the subject of a pre-application enquiry to the Council in 2014 (ref. 2014/3272/PRE). This formal submission has taken into account the comments of Officers, and significant amendments have been made to the scheme.
2. The Statement appraises the relevant planning policies and the effect of the proposed development on the Hampstead Conservation Area, which is a designated heritage asset. The submission has been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (2014). Regard has been paid to the Historic England publication on Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008).
3. This Statement has been prepared by Christian Leigh BSc(Hons), MPhil (Dist), MRTPI, who has previously undertaken work on Grade I, II* and II properties within central London and the South East, and prepared advice relating to conservation area designations. Wider work involves heritage appraisals, planning and listed building application and appeals, and enforcement matters. I have prepared advice relating to conservation area designations. Clients include a number of London Estates, local and central Government, as well as major developers and householders within London. I am currently a lecturer in planning law and practice, including heritage matters, at the Henley Business School, University of Reading
4. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF states that applications for consent affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by a description of the significance of the heritage asset affected and their contribution to their setting of that significance. This assessment was prepared following a review of the statutory records for the property, published documentation and a site visit.

The application property and surroundings

5. The property concerns a flat set over the first and second floor of the building. Other properties along Willoughby Road have similarly been converted to flats over the years. The applicants have lived in the property for many years and need to have additional space for their older years to provide for caring and other needs, and so enable them to remain in the area.
6. Willoughby Road lies within 'Sub Area Three' of the Hampstead Conservation Area, as identified in the LB Camden Conservation Area Statement (2001). This area is seen as one of homogeneity in the layout of streets, and the tall Victorian terraced houses of Willoughby Road itself are identified as being of interest. This contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is discussed in relation to the front elevation of the terrace and the general form of the building, with no discussions relating to the private views at the back of the terrace.
7. The Conservation Area Streetscape Audit (2001) identifies particular properties and features in Willoughby Road that are of note. The application property itself is not identified in this Audit.
8. The property of No. 12 has been extended in the past through a rear conservatory at ground floor in 1993 (ref. 93/00611) and a rear addition with roof terrace in 1974 (ref. 17998). These works have therefore seen modification of the original rear elevation of the building, with the formation of a new opening to the terrace at first floor and the flat roof area.
9. Other properties in the terrace have also been extended and altered to the rear. This can be seen on the submitted rear terrace elevation drawing 026.P.027.
 - Most notably this has been done at 14 Willoughby Gardens, which immediately adjoins No. 12. This has an infill at first floor between the adjoining closet wings, and a raised closet wing as well. It is uncertain when the infill was undertaken, but planning records indicate that the closet wing adjoining No. 12 was raised following a grant of permission in 1986 (ref. 8600182).
 - The other property adjoining No. 12, ie No. 10, has also seen an infill to the closet wing and new roof terrace permitted in 1992 (ref. 9100227).
 - The submitted rear terrace elevation drawing illustrates that No. 8 has seen a partial infill to the inter-closet void, although there are no planning records relating to this.
 - There is an altered closet wing to No. 6, with records showing the raising of this wing was permitted in 1976 (ref. 7/16/15).
 - No. 4 has a modern infill between the closet wings. It is not certain when that was created, since an application made in 1995 showed alterations to a previous structure (ref. 9500705), and the infill as now exists is different to the small structure at that time.
 - No. 2 also has a modern infill between the closet wings. The current appearance is the result of modifications to a previous structure and was permitted in 2016 (ref. 2016/2224/P).
10. These alterations and infills therefore all appear to have taken place and/or were permitted when the properties lay within the conservation area, ie the policy situation was essentially that which currently exists. In any event, they are changes that now form part of the character of the Area.

Appraisal of property and proposed works

Significance of property

11. The property forms part of a terrace whose front elevation is part of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. There have been some changes to the elevation of this front terrace, but together that front elevation contributes to the Area. The Council's Conservation Area Statement recognises this.
12. The rear elevation of the terrace does not display this quality. There have been modifications at all floors and the roof to properties. This includes infill between the closet wings. The rear elevation is not visible from public viewpoints, and is not mentioned at all in the Conservation Area Statement or the Streetscape Audit.
13. The external appearance of the front elevation to the terrace therefore represents the contribution of the property to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset.

Effect of the proposed works on character and appearance

14. The works now proposed are to the rear upper floor of the property, and would see an infill between the closet wings. This has been designed to mirror that seen at the adjoining property of No. 14: this is most clearly seen on submitted drawings 026.P.208 Rev 1 & P501. This would be an infill in an area that has already been modified from past infills and alterations to the property, as explained previously. Furthermore, it is an area where other buildings along the terrace have been modified.
15. This would not have any harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing building or on the wider Conservation Area. It is not a part of the Area identified by the Council or in any published literature as being of significance. The other alterations in the terrace demonstrate that such changes are now in fact part of the established character of this part of the Area. Guideline H26 of the Conservation Area Statement requires rear extensions to be *'as unobtrusive as possible and should not adversely affect the character of the building or the Conservation Area.'* The location of the infill between the closet wings – as seen at the other properties along the terrace – would satisfy this requirement.
16. Guideline H26 continues to say that such extension will mostly be single storey, *'but its general effect on neighbouring properties and Conservation Area will be the basis of its suitability'*; it is evident this is a case where the infill is suitable, since it mirrors infills seen on the terrace. Indeed, Guideline H27 then says that *'the acceptability of larger extensions depends on the particular site and circumstances'*. The particular circumstances point to this scheme being acceptable.
17. It can be further noted that the height of the proposed infill satisfies the requirements of the Camden Design Planning Guidance CPG1 (2015). This requires rear extensions to not be higher than one full storey below the roof eaves level (paragraph 4.13). As it is proposed to provide an infill below the closet wing heights, this requirement is satisfied.
18. Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan 2017 requires all development to respect the local context and character, with paragraphs 7.2-7.6 setting out the particular requirements to be met. This requires design to respond creatively to the site and its context, to have regard to the prevailing pattern of development, consider any uniformity in the townscape

(which, in this case, there is not), and to ensure any elevations are composed having regard to the character of the place.

19. Thus, Policy D1 does not set out a simplistic ‘yes/no’ approach to design proposals, but requires there to be an informed approach that considers the particular circumstances of a site and the wider area. It is clear that the architect has undertaken this process in the preparation of the application. The infill would reflect the character of the terrace within which it would sit. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved, and there would not be any harm to the significance of the heritage asset. For these reasons, the proposed works would also satisfy the requirements of Policy D2 of the Local Plan relating to the preservation of heritage assets.
20. The proposal therefore addresses the comments made by Officers at the pre-application stage. That scheme was for a new conservatory between the closet wings, above which were new, wide French Windows and then a new dormer in the upper roof itself. Officers considered the dormer would be harmful to the roofline, that the French Windows would be of an appearance and design in contrast to the building, and that a conservatory at first floor would be contrary to guidance. Thus, the scheme was modified to no longer propose the dormer window, to not have large French Windows but to simply modify the existing window to a door (as seen already at the property and at neighbouring properties), and to no longer propose a conservatory structure infill.

Amenity considerations

21. There is an existing roof terrace to the property, and other flats in the area have roof terraces and windows in close proximity. The proposed works would infill the space between closet wings, and merely relocate the existing terrace. This is at virtually identical level to the roof terrace of the adjoining property of No. 14, and so would not give rise to any material change in overlooking to existing residents. Nor would there be any change to levels of light received by residents.
22. The construction of the proposed infill would be off-site and then it would be craned into position. This will minimise disruption to neighbours during the construction period.
23. Thus, there would not be any harm to amenity, and so no conflict with Policy A1 of the Local Plan, nor the guidance in CPG6: Amenity (2010). The pre-application response concluded that the scheme would similarly not be harmful to residential amenity.

Benefits of the proposed works

24. The proposed infill will allow for the flat to adapt to the changing needs of the owners, who have lived in the flat for many years. They are now in their late 70s and wish to remain in their flat and in Hampstead, but need additional space to enable for their care in later life.
25. The works to the property would be accompanied by general upgrading of the flat in order to meet for the residents’ long-term need and care. This would enhance the quality of the accommodation and represent an improvement to the housing stock and sustainability matters.

Summary

26. The application property is a flat within an altered building, lying within the Hampstead Conservation Area. The significance of that Area as a designated heritage asset arises from the exterior appearance of the front elevation to Willoughby Road. The rear elevation has been modified through past infills and alterations, and is not mentioned in the published literature. Those alterations, ie the appearance of the rear elevations as seen now, form part of the character of the Area.
27. The proposed infill to the property is appropriate and sensitive. The design and scale has followed a careful examination of the context to the site, as is required by Local Plan policy. The infill would reflect what is seen in the terrace, and would not impose on the Area. It would not affect amenity. There would be an improvement to the quality of the housing stock, so leading to sustainability enhancements to the flat, and would enable existing residents to stay in Hampstead.
28. It is therefore considered the works would lead to no harm to the significance of the building and so, consistent with the guidance contained in paragraph 017 of the Planning Practice Guidance, the provisions of paragraphs 133 and 134 of the NPPF would not apply.
29. It is therefore concluded the works preserve the Conservation Area, and so would be consistent with the NPPF. There would also be no conflict with Policies D1, D2 and A1 of the Camden Local Plan 2017, the Guidelines of the Hampstead Conservation Area Statement and supplementary guidance on Design and Amenity. Planning permission can therefore be granted.