

37 Alma Street, NW5 3DH

**Appeal statement of case by applicant**

Planning application ref: 2017/6807/P

Decision notice dated: 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Responses 18 (4 objections recorded)

In the LPA Decision Notice it states in the reason for refusal that our proposal would be “detrimental to the character and appearance of the area”. In particular it states that the terrace has “largely un-impaired rooflines”.

In response to this, I would say that the design intention is to maintain the continuity of the streetscape and to not alter the appearance of the front façade at roof level. Following a study of the sightlines from street level the position of the volume was carefully calculated so as to establish a setback width from the wall to the parapet. The new profile was then modelled to find an angle of slope that would result in much reduced visibility from the street. This was done using a sight angle taken from the opposite pavement at pedestrian eye level.

On the point of “un-impaired rooflines” in the terrace I would contend that there have been several changes over the years to the roofs along Alma Street as is well documented in the Design and Access Statement. The reality of Alma Street is that these poorly considered and constructed roof additions exist, and they also now form an integral part of its character. We greatly appreciate Alma Street and that is why we live here, so we have approached the need to make an extension to the house in the most sensitive way we can think of doing. My opinion is that our proposal would, like the existing rooftop additions, become part of the streetscene but also show how such an addition need not be detrimental, but could actually be a positive change, executed in a careful way.

**Conservation areas and design**

Reading through the numerous consultation responses to our planning application one in particular stands out. This is written by a resident in Willes Road (n28), and I include it here:

*I have viewed the application documents and drawings. There are many roof extensions in the Inkerman Road conservation area, some of which severely detract from the appearance of the roads.*

*However, this application strikes me as having been very sensitively designed and with great consideration as to the visual impact on the area.*

*A conservation area is in place not to set in stone the appearance of properties but to preserve the character and nature of an area. By keeping families within the area, this can sometimes be achieved by allowing property extensions rather than refusing them.*

*In this particular case, the design of the roof extensions is sympathetic to the design of the houses overall in the area and in my opinion enhances the look of the street overall.*

*I wholeheartedly support the application.*

My experience of walking through London and in particular of its conservation areas is that there are many built examples of new additions, designed by architects that have sought innovative solutions. These are generally designs that have taken special account of their setting and urban context. Very often they are contemporary works that are not apologetic or pastiche. They are well detailed, use high quality materials and are part of the on-going process of change that happens over time. To completely “freeze” our built environment and lock it into its past with no possibility of modification is the opposite of this acceptance of positive change.

The comment from the resident of Willes Road makes a valid point about the problem of the “setting in stone” of an appearance and I agree with his view that a conservation area should be able to accept a discrete contemporary addition without erosion of its urban character. On the contrary the addition itself should find its place as part of a continuous process of enrichment of that character and streetscape.

I think that the design has achieved our aims. It aspires to “enhance” the streetscene, and offers a practical solution to providing an “upwards expansion” of the house with minimal awareness of the addition from street level.

#### **Local research - inspiration**

When we asked our architect to work with us on a roof addition, we looked at a recently completed project at 14 Healey Street, Camden. It was a shortlisted project in the New London Architecture exhibition called “Don’t move, improve” in 2016. The design was successful at appeal but had two previous failed planning applications. Both refusals cited that “the host terrace has “a largely un-impaired profile of valley/butterfly roofs”. Looking at the appeal statement (ref: APP/X5210/D/12/2168834), the inspector said that Healey Street is “lined with 3 storey Victorian terraced properties with valley roofs behind front parapets. From street level the streetscape appears to be largely un-altered although roof extensions have been carried out at no’s 8 and 18 Healey Street”. The inspector also said (contrary to the view of the LPA) that “there is not an unbroken run of valley roofs, nor is there an established form of roof addition or alteration”.

#### **Other points – delegated report**

The case officer in the delegated report states (at point 2.9) that the front windows would not relate to the windows below in that they are not of traditional proportions. In response to this, I would contend that the horizontal window proposed at roof level is concealed and set-back from street view. It is designed in order to allow a feeling of spaciousness when seen from the inside of the new bedroom. The clever trick of this is to create this effect while at the same time hiding the window from street view and therefore leaving the streetscape un-altered. To rigidly apply a logic of window pattern does not seem relevant to me.

A further point I wish to respond to, is stated at point 2.11. This refers to the terrace and to possible “railings”. I think that there is some misunderstanding

here. The drawings submitted state that the set-back flat roof between the parapet and the front wall of the roof addition is an area that allows “access for maintenance only”. There is not an intention to use that area as a roof “terrace” and it seems that type of use would not be in keeping with the streetscape. Therefore the detail development of this area would be to install low maintenance planting and an irrigation system to reduce the need for access. A pre-grown small hedge would be placed behind the low part of the parapet to create a “soft” safety barrier and incorporated with a wire “man-safe” system to meet regulations. There is no intention to install unsightly “railings” on the street façade.

It really is not an option for us to move from the area and enlarging the house where we live is our way to cope with a growing family, given the rapid rise in local house prices in the last few years. I would ask to you to consider my reasons for disagreement with the views of the case officer and to allow this appeal.

Colin Barr  
Applicant