



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 September 2018

by **Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 September 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/D/18/3206048

37 Alma Street, London NW5 3DH

- 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 Colin Barr against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2017/6807/P, dated 8 December 2017, was refused by notice dated 11 April 2018.
 - The development proposed is changes to interior and exterior including rear ground floor extension and additional storey at roof level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to changes to interior and exterior for an additional storey at roof level.
2. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for changes to interior and exterior for a rear ground floor extension at 37 Alma Street, London NW5 3DH in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 2017/6807/P, dated 8 December 2017, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) That part of the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Refs 152/P/01, 152/P/02, 152/P/03, 152/P/04, 152/P/05, 152/P/06, 152/P/07, 152/P/08 and 152/P/09.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main issue

3. The Council appears to raise no objection to the new rear ground floor extension. I, too, find this element of the appeal scheme acceptable because it would be modest in scale and appropriate in design and appearance. I also note that the Council has recently granted planning permission for this part of the development. Consequently, the main issue is the effect of the proposed roof level extension on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a mid-terrace dwelling that faces Alma Street in a tightly knit built up area wherein residential terraces predominate. The long terrace to which No 37 belongs was built around 1850 and largely retains its original features and historic character. At the front, it has a raised parapet wall, which gives the upper part of the terrace a strong horizontal emphasis. That the parapet is painted white visually accentuates the presence of this linear and almost continuous feature in the local street scene.
5. Despite some external alterations and additions, most of the properties in the terrace of which No 37 forms part have a high degree of uniformity in their design, form and general appearance, which is distinctive. Consequently, the terrace adds to the character and appearance of the Inkerman Conservation Area, (CA) within which the site is located. To my mind, a defining characteristic of the CA is its well-mannered streetscapes with narrow streets lined by substantial residential terraces.
6. At the front, the new roof extension would project noticeably above the parapet of the terrace. In doing so, it would breach one of the key aspects of No 37 and the wider terrace, which is the strong defining parapet wall. While there are roof level extensions further along the same terrace, the new addition would stand alone with a run of largely unaltered rooflines on either side. In that context, the proposal would create an abrupt visual break in an otherwise uniform roofline adjacent to the site that would undermine the architectural style of the host building. I also share the Council's concern that the relatively large and wide front window would fail to successfully relate to pattern and hierarchy of the existing fenestration in the front façade, in which windows are in portrait orientation and reduce in size further up the building.
7. As the new roof extension would be set back from the front parapet it would not be visible from ground level in front of the site. It would, however, be evident from the upper front windows of the properties on the opposite side of the street to No 37. The upper parts of the raised chimneystack and party walls would also be visible in oblique views from the road. Similarly, the new rear roof would be evident from some of the properties that back onto the site. While these are not public views, they also encompass part of the character of an area as it is experienced and appreciated by others.
8. Guideline Ink24 of the Council's Conservation Area Statement (CAS) states that a roof extension is unlikely to be acceptable where it would be detrimental to the form and character of the existing building or where the property forms part of a group or terrace which remains largely, but not necessarily completely, unimpaired. That would be the case with the proposal before me.
9. I saw several examples of roof additions including mansards in the local area with some existing high-level additions to properties along Alma Street, to which the Design and Access Statement refers. While these extensions form part of the character to the local area, in most instances, they exemplify the harm to which I have referred. These examples serve to clearly illustrate the benefits of preserving the remaining uniformity in the design and roof form of terraced properties. That there are other roof additions to properties along Alma Street does not therefore lend support to the appeal.

10. I share the view of the appellant and others that conserving heritage assets does not mean that all new development should be prevented or that the CA should be 'set in stone'. The important objective is, however, to manage the process of change to the CA in a way that preserves and, where appropriate, enhances its significance. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and new built form has a permanence that justifies taking a cautious approach. I also agree that innovative design to development can add visual interest and enliven the streetscape. However, such development should be interwoven into the existing built fabric so that it complements and adds to the character and qualities of the area especially in those of acknowledged heritage value.
11. Reference is made to 14 Healey Street, Camden where the appellant states that planning permission was granted on appeal for a roof level addition in similar circumstances to those of the proposal before me. From the limited information provided, I cannot be certain that direct parallels can be drawn between that case and the proposal before me. In any event, it is a central planning principle that each development should be assessed on its own merits, as I have done in this instance.
12. Several interested parties support the proposal, considering it to be sensitively designed and a sympathetic addition that would enhance the street scene and enable families to stay and grow in the area, with consequent benefits for social cohesion. However, for the reasons given, I find that the roof level extension would be incompatible in its particular context.
13. By causing material harm to the host building, the proposed roof extension would diminish the contribution of the terrace to the CA. In doing so, it would have a deleterious effect on the character and appearance of the CA, which would fail to be preserved. Although the harm to the CA would be less than substantial in this case, the public benefits of the proposal, such as the support given to the local economy during construction, would not outweigh this harm.
14. On the main issue, I therefore conclude that the proposed roof level extension would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. This part of the appeal scheme therefore conflicts with Policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan. These policies aim to ensure that high quality design is secured and that new development respects local context and character, and preserves or enhances heritage assets.
15. Once complete, the proposal would provide additional living accommodation that would improve the living conditions for the appellant and his family. It would also make efficient use of the appeal property. However, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
16. As the proposed ground floor rear extension would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the host building with no discernable effect on the local area, it would comply with the policies cited by the Council. The character and appearance of the CA would be preserved. From my inspection of the plans, this component of the development is clearly severable to the proposed roof level extension. Consequently, I am able to issue a split decision that grants planning permission solely for it, subject to conditions.

Conditions

17. In addition to the standard time limit condition, it is necessary to impose a condition that requires the approved development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans for certainty. To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the extension, it is necessary to attach a condition that requires the use of external materials to match those of the existing dwelling.

Conclusion

18. Overall, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed in part and allowed in part.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR