



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 April 2019

by M Bale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 April 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/W/18/3210011

Top Floor Flats, 8 & 9 Cliff Road, London NW1 9AN

- 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 Adrian Townsend against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2018/2323/P, dated 11 May 2018, was refused by notice dated 17 July 2018.
 - The development proposed is a roof top extension; dual application submission with No. 8 & 9 Cliff Road.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

3. The site is an existing pair of semi-detached dwellings within the Camden Square Conservation Area. The significance of the area derives, in part, from its development as a nineteenth century planned inner London suburb with a gridded street layout focused around Camden Square.
4. The architecture on Cliff Road and in the conservation area generally is not uniform. However, the Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy 2011 (CAA) explains that the main streets are lined with houses, set back from the street, on raised basements with three principal floors above. The CAA goes on to explain that the overall homogeneity is created by distinctive roofscapes and the ordering of elevations in coherent groups. I saw at the site visit that this pattern has led to generally uniform building heights around the conservation area is a key part of the area's character and appearance.
5. It is common ground between the appellant and the Council that historically Nos. 8-15 Cliff Road would have comprised 4 pairs of semi-detached houses. At some point in the past, Nos. 10-15 have been altered such that the intervening gaps have been infilled creating a terrace. Alterations to the roof are apparent from aerial photographs¹, but this is not readily discernible from

¹ As appended to the appellant's statement

- street level. I, therefore, find that the roof line of Nos. 10-15 remains largely unimpaired by alterations and extensions.
6. The alterations to Nos. 10-15 mean that Nos. 8 and 9 now exist as a separate pair. However, the architectural language of the front elevations in terms of the positioning and size of windows, stepped nature of the elevations, overall height and composition with the roof form hidden behind a parapet is common to all of Nos. 8-15 when viewed from Cliff Road. Therefore, despite differences in the façade treatment, they are clearly a coherent group and their homogeneity therefore contributes the character and appearance of the conservation area, as explained in the CAA.
 7. A previous proposal for a roof extension to No. 9 was refused and a subsequent appeal² dismissed. I can appreciate the lengths to which the appellant has gone to embrace some of the criticisms of that earlier proposal, in particular producing a single design across the pair of semi-detached properties that seeks to not affect neighbouring residents, and the ingenuity with which it would be concealed behind the parapet in views from Cliff Road. However, it is accepted by the appellant that the now proposed extension may still be visible in longer oblique views.
 8. The proposal seeks to retain a number of the existing architectural features and the shape of the roof would be based upon traditional design principles. It may well be a skilful holistic design strategy that respects the form and proportions of Nos. 8 and 9 individually. However, whilst the roof shape proposed may exist on other buildings nearby, there is no clear evidence that when combined with the parapet detailing it would be one of the traditional distinctive roof forms of the conservation area.
 9. A planning obligation could ensure that the works to both 8 and 9 were carried out together to preserve the symmetry of the pair. However, as I have found that the buildings continue to exist as part of the group with Nos. 10-15, the alteration would still undermine the character and appearance of the conservation area by diluting the group. Such an approach would also be contrary to advice in the Camden Planning Guidance: Design 2015³, which indicates that roof additions are likely to be unacceptable where they affect groups of buildings that are largely unimpaired by alterations or extensions, even when a proposal involves adding to the whole terrace or group as a coordinated design.
 10. The proposals for the rear elevation would pick up on the oversized windows that exist in the existing main walls and would not be particularly incongruous in themselves. I also observed that the existing rear elevation roof form of Nos. 8 and 9 does differ from Nos. 10-15 and the group is less clearly defined when viewed from the rear. However, whilst it may be difficult to see the site from Camden Mews or Torriano Avenue, the additional height is likely to appear incongruous when viewed from Camden Park Road. Although Cliff Road Studios would remain higher, this is a distinctly different architectural form that, unlike the appeal site, does not follow that of the more traditional, originally planned development that defines the character and appearance of the conservation area. It does not, therefore, set a precedent for additional height at the appeal site.

² APP/X5210/W/16/3160504

³ Updated March 2018

11. There is some local support for the development. I also understand that the proposal would provide some larger homes and better accommodation for families along with general improvements to the housing stock as supported by the London Plan and certain policies of the Camden Local Plan 2017. Benefits could arise from improvements to energy efficiency and the incorporation of renewable energy technology. However, on a development of this scale, these benefits would be limited.
12. I note the appellant's suggestion that the Council did not want to engage in discussions surrounding amendments to the scheme, and perception that the Council had not fully engaged with the revisions from the previous proposal. However, this has little to do with the planning merits of the case.
13. Overall, for the reasons given, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. As explained in the CAA, the character and appearance is intrinsically linked to the significance of this area and so less than substantial harm would occur to the significance of the heritage asset. For the reasons given, the public benefits of the proposal would not outweigh this harm.
14. The proposal, therefore, conflicts with those aims of LP Policies D1 and D2 which seek to ensure that development respects local context and character, and preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area.
15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Bale

INSPECTOR