



Kate Henry
London Borough of Camden
2nd Floor, 5 Pancras Square
Town Hall
Judd Street
London, WC1H 9JE

Sent by email: planning@camden.gov.uk

04 November 2021

Dear Kate Henry

2021/3839/P - Howitt Close Howitt Road London NW3 4LX

The Twentieth Century Society has been alerted to the above application for full planning permission for a “Mansard roof extension to create 7 flats” to Howitt Close, a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) within the Belsize Conservation Area. The Society objects to the application due to the harm caused to an NDHA which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

Background

Howitt Close is an interwar T-shaped block of flats, located on a corner site where Howitt Road meets Glenilla Road in Belsize Park. Glenloch, Glemore, Glenilla and Howitt roads were created in the early 20th-century on the site of a large 1860s house called The Woodlands. The Belsize Conservation Area Statement (2003) describes the ‘Glenloch Area’ as a “distinctive area of Edwardian terraced housing developed by the Glenloch Insurance Company close to Belsize Park Underground Station [opened 1907] and Haverstock Hill” (p.25).

British History Online (BNO) expands on this, outlining its development in the interwar period: “Glenloch Investment Co. was responsible for the Woodlands estate, where houses were still being built in Glenilla Road in 1923-4 and blocks of flats were put up, Glenloch Court in 1927 and Banff House and Howitt Court in 1932.” This is almost certainly Howitt Close which was built on the site of the Woodlands estate between the Ordnance Survey (OS) map was published in 1920 and revised in 1935. A 1932 archive document relating to the building includes the name of the architect’s practice, Henry F. Webb & Ash. Howitt Close is a 3-storey, brown brick building with distinctive stepped bays, red brick dressings, rendered upper storey and flat roof with projecting eaves. Its entrance bay features a porch with paired columns and decorative iron balcony, and period lettering reads ‘Howitt Close’.

The 1920s and 30s saw the construction of more blocks of flats nearby, including Gilling Court (1932) and Holmfield Court (1933) on Belsize Grove built by the Bell Properties Trust, and Hillfield Estates’ Hillfield Court and Mansions (1934) fronting Haverstock Hill and

Tudor Close (1935) behind, all of which are included within the boundaries of the Belsize Conservation Area.

Policy

As outlined in paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021), “Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance [...] These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”.

The NPPF advises that “The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.” The current application will result in the total loss of a NDHA. No justification has been provided for its total demolition, and no evidence submitted to show that the significant surviving parts of the building cannot be retained as part of a new development.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF relates to designated heritage assets, which includes conservation areas: “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).”

Comments

Howitt Close is a good example of an interwar block of flats and is clearly of architectural merit. The Belsize Conservation Area Statement (2003) identifies Howitt Close as a building which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area (p.30).

On ‘Roof Extensions’, the Belsize Conservation Area Statement states that “Roof extensions and alterations, which change the shape and form of the roof, can have a harmful impact on the Conservation Area”. Such extensions “are unlikely to be acceptable where: It would be detrimental to the form and character of the existing building” (p.41). We agree with the Belsize Conservation Area Advisory Committee (BCAAC) who have objected to the proposed extension on the grounds that it “would be out of keeping with the date, design and style of the building” and would be ‘obtrusive’ and dominant.

The applicant claims that the flat roof is “uncommon within the Conservation Area sub-area and does not contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area” (Heritage Statement, p.3). We believe the building’s flat roof is a key part of its interwar character and appearance, and distinguishes it from neighbouring buildings in a way that contributes to the variety and interest of the sub-area. The proposed mansard roof will harm the building’s architectural interest and uniqueness.

Summary

The Twentieth Century Society objects to the application due to the harm caused to a non-designated heritage asset and to the character of the conservation area. We encourage the local authority to refuse planning permission.

I hope these comments are of use to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,



Coco Whittaker

Caseworker

Twentieth Century Society

Remit: The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.

The Twentieth Century Society

70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ

coco@c20society.org.uk 020 7250 3857

www.c20society.org.uk