



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2022

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/D/22/3294834

4 Countess Road, London NW5 2NT

- 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 & Mrs Andrew Ogilvie against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2021/3484/P, dated 16 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 4 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion including part demolition of roof to insert a rear dormer window and roof lights to the front.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Kentish Town Conservation Area (the KTCA).

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to a three storey terraced dwelling located on the southern side of Countess Road, within a group from Nos 2 to 22. The surrounding streets form a grid pattern with the rear elevations of a terrace on Ascham Street directly behind, and those of dwellings on Leverton Street standing perpendicular to the appeal site on the western side. A corresponding terrace on Lady Margaret Road stands further away to the east.
4. The KTCA Appraisal and Management Strategy (March 2011) sets out that it comprises the historic village of Kentish Town along with residential areas developed in the 18th and 19th century suburban expansion of London. The significance of the KTCA derives from the high architectural quality of the area, with Countess Road forming part of the 'Northern Streets' of mainly residential, three storey terraces within narrow plots, with rusticated stucco and canted bay on the ground floor a common feature.
5. The dwellings on Countess Road exhibit these features and overall a strong degree of consistency in their design, and are understandably regarded as making a positive contribution to the conservation area.
6. The group within which the appeal dwelling sits have pitched roofs, which differ from the valley roofs of adjacent dwellings on Leverton Street and Ascham Street. The proposal seeks to add a dormer window and rooflight to the rear roof slope, and two further rooflights to the front roof slope.

7. Camden's Planning Guidance: Home Improvements (2021) sets out design criteria for dormer windows, in particular that they sit within the roof slope and appear as an extension to the existing roof whilst the existing roof form is maintained, that they are subordinate to the roof slope being altered and that they are set even distances from the margins of the roof slope. The KTCA Appraisal further identifies roof extensions as a threat to the quality of the area.
8. The roofline of the group is unaltered by extensions, except for a sole dormer to the rear roof slope of No 2, the end property of the terrace next door to the appeal site. The roofline of No 2 and No 4 can be glimpsed through the gap to the south between the terraces on Leverton Street and Ascham Street, but the wider roofline of the terrace is visible from the rear elevations of properties on both of these streets. The dormer at No 2 is an exception to one end of an otherwise unaltered and intact roofline. Given this context, the introduction of an additional dormer would disrupt the surviving consistency of the wider terrace.
9. Moreover, the dormer would not match the example at No 2 in position, size or design. It would not be centred within the roof slope like the dormer to No 2, but would be offset to one side. It would also be larger in size than that next door and would have a more horizontal emphasis to its shape. The size of the window opening would also be larger than windows on the floors below, with a glazing pattern that would conflict with the traditional sash windows of the rear elevation. Consequently, the proposal would fail to align with the hierarchy of fenestration and would harm the overall composition of the rear elevation and the wider terrace.
10. I recognise that on nearby terraces, dormer windows and mansard extensions have become more established over time. However, the immediate surroundings within which the appeal site is experienced are characterised by a lack of roof extensions not only to the terrace on Countess Road, but also the terrace to the side on Leverton Street and that to the rear on Ascham Street where original rooflines continue to predominate.
11. Roof extensions are glimpsed to the east on Lady Margaret Road; however, the proposed dormer would not be viewed as part of that roofscape, but would form an anomalous feature that would disrupt the largely unaltered Countess Road roofline, a feature that is a constituent part of the high architectural quality that contributes positively to the significance of the conservation area.
12. Examples on other streets further from the appeal site have their own separate contexts and, in some cases, the piecemeal pattern and uncoordinated design of roof extensions detracts somewhat from the architectural integrity of these other terraces. Therefore, I do not regard these other examples as directly comparable to the proposal before me, and they do not lead me to a different view on this main issue.
13. The proposed rooflights would be minor additions that would not alter the overall shape of the roof. However, these would not mitigate for the harmful appearance of the proposed rear dormer.
14. For the reasons set out, therefore, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance, and heritage significance, of the KTCA. This would conflict with Policies D1 and D2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017), and Policy D3

of the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan (2016) which together require development to be of the highest architectural and urban design quality, which complements and enhances the distinct local character and identity of the area, and to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas.

15. The harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset would be less than substantial, in the language of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 202 of the Framework directs that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
16. The proposal would deliver some economic benefits through employment for contractors in the construction of the development, though this would be temporary and limited in scale. I acknowledge that the appellants are seeking to extend their property to facilitate their growing family and working from home. However, the additional accommodation provided would be primarily a private benefit for the appellants, with any public benefit accruing from enlarging a dwelling within the housing stock being of very limited weight.
17. The evidence before me does not indicate any other tangible public benefits. Therefore, public benefits in this case would not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, to which the Framework directs I must give great weight. As a result, the Framework indicates that this provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.

Other Matters

18. The Council did not find harm in respect of neighbours' living conditions. Whilst I have found harm with the design of the proposal, it would be positioned such that the massing would not cause an overbearing effect on neighbouring properties. Moreover, the proposed windows would face the same direction as existing windows, and would not lead to new opportunities for overlooking that would cause a harmful loss of privacy for nearby occupants. However, this absence of harm is ultimately a neutral factor weighing neither for nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

19. I have found that the proposal would result in conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole. No other material considerations exist that would outweigh the development plan conflict and justify granting planning permission in this case.
20. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K. Savage

INSPECTOR