

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 September 2016

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 03 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/W/16/3152834

1-8 Harmood Grove, London NW1 8DH

- 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 Citadel Investments against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2016/1328/P, dated 9 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is the modification of existing fencing (part retrospective).
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Application for Costs

1. An application for costs was made by Citadel Investments against of the Council of the London Borough of Camden. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of Harmood Grove and the setting of the Harmood Street Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. Harmood Grove is a short, narrow cul-de-sac located partly within a conservation area of mainly 19th Century terraced houses. The Council's Harmood Street Conservation Area Statement aptly advises that a feature of the area is small front gardens usually defined by low brick boundary walls or the occasional palisade fence. Although the appeal site is just outside of the conservation area, I take this advice into account in assessing the character of the general area.
 5. The only development in Harmood Grove itself is at the appeal site: an attractive modern building in mixed office and residential use set behind bespoke designed steel railings sitting on top of a low brick wall, with gates made of intentionally rusty Cor-ten steel (also known as weathering steel) panels. The appeal proposal includes a retrospective element - new matching railings have already been installed above the short southern section of fence
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and gates – plus a proposal for the installation of weathering steel fence panels over the remainder of enclosure.

6. The additional sections would bring the total height of the enclosure to well over 3m for an extensive length, running along the back of the footway at the front of the building. The height and length of the structure would be imposing and highly defensive in appearance on this already tightly enclosed street. This impact would be exacerbated by the almost completely solid, opaque nature of the proposed high level steel panels. The overall effect would be to make the site look like a fortified enclosure, out of character with this primarily residential area of houses with more open frontages.
7. The proposed high level steel panels would also disrupt close range views of the building from the conservation area in Harmood Grove and at the junction with Clarence Way. I note that there are some other enclosures of similar height at the entrance to Harmood Grove, but these cover shorter lengths and enclose back gardens rather than frontages. The high level enclosure at 87 Clarence Way next to the appeal site consists of railings for a roof terrace, with a very different purpose and impact.
8. I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of Harmood Grove and the setting of the conservation area. It therefore conflicts with the aims of Policy CS14 of the Camden Core Strategy and Policies DP24 and DP25 of the Camden Development Policies, to ensure that development is of the highest standard of design that respects local context and to prevent development outside of a conservation area that causes harm to the character and appearance of that conservation area.
9. I understand that the proposal is meant to address ongoing problems with break-ins and note that some, though not all, of the nearby modern blocks of flats have access gates and railings of a similar height - reinforcing the point that there are local security issues. Although I also note that CCTV cameras have been installed at Nos 1-8, there do not appear to have been discussions with the police about potential alternative security solutions. I find that the need for increased site security does not outweigh the clear harm to local character and appearance that this proposal would cause.
10. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR