
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 October 2016

by Sarah Housden BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/K5600/W/16/3156144

1a & 2a St Luke's St, Kensington and Chelsea, London SW3 3RS

- 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 C L Stone against the decision of The Council of The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.
- The application Ref PP/16/01221, dated 24 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 April 2016.
- The development proposed is 'construction of new mansard roof extension with rooms within the roof space over both properties (1a and 2a St Luke's St) divided by party wall, internal renovation to second floors to allow for access to new mansard roof'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. At my site visit, there was no access available to the rear of the appeal site. However, based on what I saw from the surrounding area at the site visit and the evidence before me, I am satisfied that I have sufficient information to assess the effect of the proposal on the appeal dwellings and the wider area.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is whether or not the character or appearance of the Chelsea Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced, having particular regard to the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwellings.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within a predominantly residential area which lies between the King's Road and Cale St and comprises a three storey pair of dwellings at the end of a terraced row. No 1a has had basement and rear extensions and at the time of my site visit, construction works for a basement and extension to No 2a were underway¹.
5. In the exercise of planning functions, the statutory test is that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that 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.

¹ Planning permission ref PP/15/02394

6. Based on the submitted Chelsea Conservation Area Appraisal (2016) and my observations at the site visit, St Luke's St is characterised by two and three storey terraces dating from the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. Although there have been more recent infill developments, the similar architectural form and traditional detailing of the terraced rows creates a sense of unity and cohesiveness which contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.
7. When approaching along the road from the south, the terraced rows on both sides of St Luke's St are viewed against the backdrop of the multi-storied development along Cale St, including the Sutton Estate in which mansard roofs are an original design feature. However, when viewed from Cale St, the appeal properties are viewed in conjunction with the more modest and unassuming two storey terraces along St Luke's St. Although the more recent development opposite the appeal site is three storey, its simple appearance and the spacing of door and window openings reflect the features of the traditional terraces along the road, contributing to the unity and cohesiveness of the Conservation Area.
8. The appeal dwellings contrast to some extent with others in the row by reason of their three storey height and decorative architrave to the first and second floor windows. However, the simplicity and proportions of the door and window openings create an unassuming and modest appearance which contributes to the unified appearance of the houses in the row.
9. Some of the houses on the west side of St Luke's St have had roof alterations. Nos 17 to 21 have had mansard roofs added which are set behind the parapet gutter. However, the party wall supporting the chimneys provides a degree of enclosure, such that the mansard roofs are not unduly prominent. Nos 32 and 33 have also had additions to the roof with projecting flat roof dormers. The mansard roof on No 33 Cale St (No 33) adjacent to the appeal site is seen in conjunction with the larger scale development along that road and the building is separated from the appeal site by the garage and garden to the rear of No 33.
10. The proposed mansard roof would span both dwellings. Notwithstanding the insertion of a central parapet, due to its overall width and flat roof form, it would have a horizontal emphasis which would be unsympathetic to the vertical proportions of the front elevations of the host dwellings. Although it would be set back behind the parapet wall, approximately 1.3 metres of the roof would project above the wall. Whilst views of the roof would be limited when standing opposite the site, it would be visible from longer distances on St Luke's St and Cale St.
11. The additional height and bulk of the roof would result in the pair of dwellings having a more prominent and imposing appearance in the terraced row which would 'draw the eye'. This would be harmful to their existing modest character and appearance and would disrupt the unified appearance and unassuming character of the terrace which is part of the significance of the Conservation Area. When viewed from Cale St, the profile of the chimney on the side elevation of No 1a would also be lost. Rather than creating more balance with surrounding properties as suggested in representations, the proposal would disrupt the unity of the terraced row.
12. The Council has also expressed concern about the loss of the traditional butterfly roof form to the rear of the dwellings. Again, the horizontal emphasis

of the proposed mansard roof and large dormer windows would create a top heavy appearance which would dominate the rear elevations. The butterfly roof form would become a subordinate feature and this would harm the vertical proportions and emphasis of the rear elevations. Whilst public views of the rear of the dwellings would be limited, this does not negate the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the host dwellings and the Conservation Area.

13. I recognise that the proposal has been reduced in height and bulk and set further back from the parapet wall in response to concerns raised by the Council and that the detailed design follows the advice on roof alterations in the Council's 'Guide to Alterations and Extensions on Domestic Buildings'. High quality materials and finishes would be employed as set out in the Design and Access Statement. However, for the reasons outlined above, the proposal would harm the existing character and appearance of the host dwellings and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. For these reasons, it would be contrary to Policies CL1, CL2, CL3, CL8 and CL11 of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Consolidated Local Plan (2015) (LP) which seek, amongst other things, to ensure that new development is of a high quality design which respects the existing context and preserves or enhances Conservation Areas.
14. The impact of the proposal would be relatively localised and in my view the harm to the Conservation Area identified above would be less than substantial. The Framework makes clear in paragraph 134 that where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
15. The ease of maintaining the proposed roof compared with the existing valley gutters is essentially a private matter and does not weigh in favour of the proposal. The appellant also indicates that the proposal would secure the optimal viable use for the properties which have limited scope for other extensions to create bedroom accommodation. However, there is nothing in the evidence to indicate that the appeal properties are under threat as part of the designated heritage asset. In short, there would be little public benefit arising from the proposal which would outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the host dwellings and the Conservation Area.
16. Whilst the appellant has indicated that a mansard roof has been approved opposite the site, I have no further details of that scheme so cannot comment further. The site referred to me at 190 – 196 City Road is in Moorfields Conservation Area and is not comparable with the location of the appeal site. I have had regard to the presence of other roof extensions nearer to the appeal dwellings, some of which are referred to above and to the appellant's point that the proposal would continue the evolution of building styles in the area. However, none of these matters are of sufficient weight to outweigh the harm identified in relation to the main issue in this case to which I attach considerable weight.
17. A resident living opposite the site has indicated that the proposal would reduce levels of sunlight reaching their property. However, since the appeal is being dismissed for other reasons, I make no further comments on that matter.

18. For the reasons outlined above, and having had regard to all of the other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Housden

INSPECTOR