
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 March 2017

by Andrew Dawe BSc(Hons) MSc MPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 07 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/D/16/3165329

34 Harmood Street, London NW1 8DJ

- 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 Christian Murphy against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2016/4754/P, dated 25 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing second floor mansard roof extension and replacing it with new mansard addition of a higher design quality.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Harmood Street Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

3. The site is located in the CA and as such special attention has to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
 4. The CA is characterised by a variety of buildings, largely in the form of residential terraces of varying lengths in the vicinity of the site, often set back a short distance from the road behind small front gardens. That comprising Nos 14 to 34 is particularly prominent at the southern end of the CA, due to its length and attractive, generally consistent and largely unaltered, traditional frontage design. As such, that terrace makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. No 34 is at one end of the terrace on a fairly prominent corner plot.
 5. Nos 22 and 34 are the exceptions in respect of that terrace in terms of having mansard roof extensions. That of No 22 is very prominent, clearly visible from the street above the distinct horizontal line of the terrace's front rooftop parapet. However, that of No 34, regardless of whether or not it lacks any architectural merit, is more discrete with very little of it visible from public vantage points. In that respect it is only that of No 22 which clearly breaks the current level of uniformity in the terrace, in terms of the streetscene. That was
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granted planning permission a number of years ago, and I do not have the full details of the circumstances relating to the decision or the relevant development plan policies at that time. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has also since been published which represents a material factor in considering the appeal. In any case, I have determined this appeal on its own merits, and that extension at No 22 only serves to demonstrate the dominant effect of breaking the otherwise generally consistent roofscape and frontage design of the terrace, when seen from public vantage points.

6. The proposed extension would be noticeably larger than the one it would replace, in terms of height and depth. It would be partially screened by the existing parapet wall. However, unlike the existing mansard, it is likely that it would be clearly visible above that wall from vantage points along Harmood Street, including on the approaches to the site. As such, together with that of No 22, it would further disrupt the roofscape and attractive, generally consistent, design of the terrace seen from Harmood Street. I note that there are trees at the front of the site that would provide some partial screening or softening from some vantage points but not all and certainly not in the winter months with the leaves off. The extent of such screening or softening could also not be relied upon in terms of the long term maintenance or survival of those trees.
7. The increased height and depth would also cause it to be prominently visible at the rear from the adjacent Clarence Way. Whilst the rear of the terrace is less formal in appearance and less visible in its entirety from the street, the distinctive valley style roof parapet is a distinct and prominent feature of those small number that are visible, particularly that of No 34. Again the existing mansard is not clearly visible from the street but that proposed, due to its greater depth and height would be and would significantly distract from that existing distinctive valley parapet feature. The inclusion of the proposed French doors at the rear of the proposed extension would be likely to further draw disproportionate attention towards it.
8. I have had regard to the visual effect of the modern, higher development being constructed immediately to the south of the terrace, including a mansard element. However, that is outside of the CA, comprises a comprehensive development of that plot, and is of a clearly different design to that terrace of Nos 14 to 34 which generally retains its integrity in the context of the CA.
9. I acknowledge the concerns with the existing mansard in terms of its design, relating to surface water drainage problems and leakage of water through to the first floor accommodation below, and the desire therefore to replace it. However, I have received no substantive evidence to demonstrate that the proposed design would be the sole possible solution for addressing that leakage issue.
10. Having regard to paragraphs 132 and 134 of the Framework, harm to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial due to the small scale of development in the context of the CA as a whole. However, together with my finding in respect of the existing rainwater leakage problems, I have not received any substantive evidence of any public benefits relating to the proposal to weigh against that harm.

11. For the above reasons, the proposed development would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the CA. As such, it would be contrary to policy CS14 of the Camden Core Strategy and policies DP24 and DP25 of the Camden Development Policies which together, amongst other things, require development of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character, and preserves and enhances Camden's heritage assets, including conservation areas.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Dawe

INSPECTOR