
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2017

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 14 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V5570/D/17/3172879

223 Blackstock Road, Islington, London N5 2LL

- 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 DPA London Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Islington.
 - The application Ref P2016/4263/FUL, dated 28 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 19 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is erection of a two storey rear extension at second and third floor levels and an extension at roof level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of nearby residents, with particular regard to outlook, privacy, daylight and visual impact.

Reasons

Background

3. Previously, planning permission¹ was granted at 223 Blackstock Road for the conversion of the existing second floor into a one bedroom flat and a new third floor extension. It appears that the permitted works have commenced, but the third floor extension has not been completed. However, I have considered the appeal on the basis that the permitted scheme could be completed, and that the current appeal proposal would be in addition to that scheme.

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is a three storey building with a commercial use on the ground floor and flatted accommodation above. It sits at the north end of a terrace of three storey brick buildings. The proposal would create a two storey rear extension at second and third floor levels, and a roof extension, which would provide additional accommodation for the existing flats.
5. The surrounding area is characterised by buildings of varying dates and architectural styles. The adjacent terrace is of a traditional character, with

¹ P081503

runs of high level decorative cornicing, and a parapet concealing the butterfly roofs behind. Other features include decorative brick arches with painted keystones over the windows. All these elements are characteristic of the traditional urban terraced form found in the wider area. Despite some alterations, the block retains its traditional character and uniformity of appearance.

6. To the north of the terrace is a chamfered corner, and No 223 sits slightly behind this feature. It differs from the terrace in terms of its more plain architectural treatment and lower floor to ceiling heights. Nonetheless, it is read as a visual continuation of the terrace. The Council's document entitled 'Urban Design Guide – Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD, January 2017) states that the roofline is an important factor contributing to the rhythm and uniformity of a street, and that a well-defined roofline throughout helps give terraces their inherent rhythm and unity. It advises that roof extensions should be sympathetic to the host building and harmonise with the predominant roofline in the vicinity.
7. Once completed, the permitted third floor extension would raise No 223 to a height approximate to that of the adjacent terrace. The appeal scheme would add an additional storey in the form of a mansard, with a sloped front elevation incorporating vertical dormer windows. I accept that the new windows would align with the windows below and would replicate their design. However, the proposal would give a disproportionate bulk to the upper level, appearing neither sympathetic nor subsidiary to the modest scale of the existing property. The new dormer windows would add a further element of visual complexity at roof level, detracting from the simplicity of the existing built form of the appeal property.
8. The front parapet wall would be built up slightly, and so would disrupt the roofline of the terrace, which steps down from south to north towards No 223 in response to the fall of the land in this direction. The traditional form of the concealed roof would be altered, disrupting this uniform characteristic of the appeal site and its neighbours to the south, and detracting from their overall character.
9. I accept that a roof extension has been built at 235 Blackstock Road, at the southern end of the block. Whilst this development has altered the appearance of the terrace, the SPD is clear that the predominant roofline should be taken into account, which in this case is of hidden roofs behind the frontage walls. The presence of the extension at No 235 would therefore not justify the harm I have identified.
10. The appellant contends that at roof level, the proposal would be less prominent and less visible from the ground, but I disagree. The development would be clearly visible in shorter views from Blackstock Road, and would be particularly apparent in longer views along Elwood Street as one approaches the Blackstock Road junction.
11. At the rear, the proposed two storey extension would project from the existing rear elevation by approximately 3m. It would remain stepped back from the eastern edge of the existing first floor extension. The rear elevation at No 223 has been subject to a significant degree of alteration and extension, as have the neighbouring buildings to the south. As a result, the appearance of the rear elevations is poor. The new extensions would be constructed in materials

so as to blend visually with the existing property. Although the upper elements of the proposal would be visible from the gap on Riversdale Road, its visual impact on the public realm would be limited. I am therefore satisfied that the appearance of the rear of No 223 would not be materially worsened by the development.

12. Nonetheless, by virtue of the visual impact at the front, I find that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would thus conflict with Policy DM2.1 of Islington's Local Plan: Development Management Policies (DMP, June 2013), insofar as it requires all forms of development to make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of an area. It would also conflict with Policy CS8 of Islington's Core Strategy (CS, February 2011), whose aim is to enhance Islington's character, CS Policy CS9, which seeks to protect and enhance the built environment, and the advice given in the SPD.
13. The development would be at odds with Policy 7.4 of the London Plan (LP, March 2016), insofar as it requires that development should have regard to the form and structure of an area, place or street, and LP Policy 7.6, which amongst other things states that architecture should make a positive contribution. Finally, it would conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks to secure high quality design.
14. In support of their case, the appellant has drawn my attention to a number of other properties in the area, including 219/221 Blackstock Road. This is a large, flatted development of a contemporary character. Similarly, 3 Elwood Street is a sizeable development of a modern design. These buildings are undoubtedly prominent and have influenced the character of the streetscene. However, they are complete compositions with their own distinct character and visual coherency. By contrast, the mansard proposal would disrupt the unified character of the older terrace, and would thus fail to enhance its appearance.
15. At 58 Canning Road and 104 Highbury Park, prominent new roof extensions have been added to traditional terraced buildings. However, the details of the circumstances in which these developments were found to be acceptable are not before me, and so I am unable to be certain if they offer a direct parallel to the appeal scheme. I accept that the proposed development would be smaller in scale than these examples and so would have a proportionately lesser impact on the streetscene. Nonetheless, each case is to be judged on its own merits, and these examples would not justify the harm I have identified.
16. The appellant argues that the proposal would redress the balance in visual terms against Nos 219/221, and would add character and visual interest to the appeal site. However, in my view, the proposed mansard would appear as a standard example of this type of development. It would not incorporate design features of any notable quality over and above the typical mansard design. I therefore disagree that the development would be particularly visually attractive, or would serve to contribute positively to the architectural evolution of the area.

Living conditions

17. Riversdale Road meets Blackstock Road at an acute angle, and as a result, the properties within the triangular space back onto each other at very close quarters. Nos 2-6 Riversdale Road sit in close proximity to the rear of the

appeal site. The only private outdoor space available to these properties is to the rear. On the ground floor level, the areas are small, and outlook from them is limited by the density of the surrounding development. There is also a terrace at first floor level at 6 Riversdale Road.

18. Although shielded from public view, the privacy of occupants using these spaces is already reduced by overlooking from the surrounding properties. I agree that a certain degree of overlooking is to be expected in a built-up urban area of this kind. However, within such a confined context, the projection of the new rear extension by an additional 3m would bring the built form of the appeal site significantly closer to the outdoor areas, increasing the sense of enclosure within them. Similarly, the limited outlook from the habitable rooms at the backs of Nos 2-6 would be further diminished.
19. The development would incorporate new terraces at second and fourth floor levels. These would be big enough to be used comfortably by the occupants of the appeal property. As a result, they would give rise to an unacceptable degree of overlooking of the Riversdale Road properties, thus materially harming the living conditions of those occupants. The appellant suggests that fencing or balustrading could be installed around the terraces to limit overlooking. However, the proposed plans show the fencing around the new terraces to be fairly low in height. If these were to be raised to a height necessary to stop overlooking, then it is likely that outlook from the terraces would be limited, thus creating unsatisfactory spaces that would feel overly enclosed.
20. The Council has also raised concerns over the use of the first floor terrace. This area is currently accessed from a door which is located within a toilet cubicle on the first floor. There is no evidence before me to suggest that this would change, and that the use of this terrace would be intensified as a result of the development.
21. At the rear of Nos 219/221, a number of habitable rooms are located adjacent to the appeal site. The windows face east along the side elevation of No 223. As the rear extension would run in line with the existing side elevation, it would not impinge significantly on this line of sight. However, the amount of natural daylight reaching the windows would be materially reduced by the increased bulk and height at No 223, to the detriment of the living conditions of occupants.
22. Drawing these factors together, I therefore find that the development would unacceptably harm the living conditions of nearby residents. It would thus conflict with DMP Policy DM2.1, insofar as it requires development to provide a good level of amenity.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR