The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 March 2020

by Graeme Robbie BA(Hons) BPl MRTPI

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

Decision date: 17 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K5600/W/19/3243461
Flat 6, 15 Redcliffe Square, London SW10 9JX

- 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 Matteo Minoli against the decision of The Council of The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.
- The application Ref PP/19/05551, dated 15 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 October 2019.
- The development proposed is conversion of roof space of flat 6 into habitable accommodation with alterations to the pitch of the rear roof with the construction of mansard roof. Insertion of 2no. conservation roof lights to the rear elevations.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character of the Boltons Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is situated on the southern side of Redcliffe Square and lies within the Boltons Conservation Area (BCA). The BCA Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) describes Redcliffe Square as being one of two 'grand architectural set-pieces' in the BCA, noting its 'highly eclectic flavour' that is carefully executed and mostly well preserved.

4. Significantly, and crucially in respect of the appeal proposal, the CAA goes on to identify Redcliffe Square's roofline as 'by far the most unusual', not just in the BCA, but also the wider area. The buildings within the square have a consistent slated mansard roofline in a French Renaissance style, bookended by double-height mansards with similarly proportioned features centrally within each row. Between these features, the ridge line, mansard faces and roof-planes front and rear demonstrate a pleasing sense of unity and consistency, notwithstanding minor interventions in the form of dormer windows and the removal and replacement of original lucarne windows. Noticeable too in the punctuation of the roofline are the strident firewalls and chimneys which introduce add further consistency and rhythm to the roofline.

5. At the rear, the distinctive roofline of this block is perhaps more prominent and evident in views from and along Redcliffe Mews, where the roofline and cascading rear outriggers are visible above the mews buildings. Indeed, longer views towards the rear are available in a manner that is not possible from ground level at the front due to the trees surrounding the central garden in

Redcliffe Square. Nevertheless, the consistency of roofline punctuated by the firewalls and chimneys is as distinctive at the rear as it is at the front and becomes increasingly more evident in private views from higher elevations on surrounding properties.

6. The proposed roof extension would have very little impact in views of the Redcliffe Square façade. The mansard ridge line and face would remain in the same position and height, and at the same roof pitch. However, the extension would be very much more noticeable from, and disruptive to, the rear of the building, and the significance of Redcliffe Square and its roofscape is derived not solely from the front, but also from the contribution that the rear of the property makes to the overall roofscape.

7. Although the ridge height would not be altered, an area of flat roof extending from the existing ridge level would have the effect of introducing a second ridge further towards the rear of the property. In views of the rear elevation from ground level on Redcliffe Mews the additional rearward projection of the new ridge would break the otherwise consistent visible roofline along the rear of the block. Moreover, using the reference point of the respective firewalls and chimneys as a point of comparison with neighbouring roofs, the different roof-pitch and ridge position of the proposal would be readily evident relative to neighbouring properties. Given the prevailing consistency and uniformity at roof level, any deviation from that would be incongruous and harmful to the unity of the block as a whole.

8. I accept that the works would be carried out at height. However, neither that nor the location of the works on the rear of the property lessen the harmful impact that the proposal would have. The works would be visible from ground level in views along Redcliffe Mews and in private views from upper floors of neighbouring properties at the rear. These private views contribute to resident's understanding of the significance and character and appearance of the BCA, and would also be harmed by the proposal.

9. The reason for refusal refers to a number of policies from the Local Plan (LP). Collectively, these policies seek to secure the highest quality of design in all development. Of particular relevance however is LP policy CL1 which requires all development to respect existing context, character and appearance. Proposals will be expected to contribute positive to townscape through, amongst other things, addressing matters such as roofscape and for development to respond to local context.

10. LP policy CL8 refers specifically to roof alterations and additional storeys and requires such works to be architecturally sympathetic to the age and character of the building and group of buildings. It goes on to state at CL8(b) that proposals for additional storeys and roof level alterations will, amongst other things, be resisted on terraces or groups of buildings where the existing roofline is unimpaired by extensions[1], where buildings have a roof structure or form of historic or architectural interest[2] or where the roofline is exposed to long views from public spaces and would have an intrusive impact on that view[3]. LP policy CL11(c) also requires proposals within conservation areas to

[1] LP policy CL8(b)(i)
[2] LP policy CL8(b)(iii)
[3] LP policy CL8(b)(v)

preserve or enhance views that are identified in conservation area appraisals, including the rears of properties.

11. For the reasons that I have set out above, the proposal would be contrary to LP policy CL8 and would, as a consequence, fail to secure development of the highest quality design, fail to respect local context and character and fail to make a positive contribution to townscape, of which roofscape is an important contributory factor. The proposal would therefore also be contrary to LP policies CL1, CL2, CL8 and CL11 and would, for the same reasons as I have set out above, also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the BCA. In this respect the proposal would fail to accord with LP policy CL3.

12. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a statutory duty upon the decision maker to ensure that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the designated heritage asset's[4] conservation when considering the impact of a development upon the significance of that asset[5]. It goes on to state that any harm to the significance of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

13. I have concluded that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the BCA. This amounts to harm to the conservation area, albeit that that harm would, in the parlance of the Framework, be less than substantial. The Framework states[6] that less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

14. The proposal would bring private benefits to the appellant in terms of additional usable and habitable floorspace whilst also enabling the re-modelling of the existing level of accommodation to provide a largely open plan living area. However, there are no public benefits to balance against the harm that I have identified above. I am required to give great weight to the asset's conservation which, the Framework states, is irrespective of whether the harm is total loss, substantial or, as in this instance, less than substantial. The proposal would therefore also fail to accord with the provisions of section 16 of the Framework.

15. I have been referred, in vague terms, to other examples of mansard roofs in neighbouring streets but have not been provided with any further details of those examples. I have, in any event, determined the appeal proposal on its own merits and on the basis of the evidence before me and I give this matter limited weight.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons I have set out, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graeme Robbie INSPECTOR

[4] Conservation Areas are designated heritage assets
[5] Framework paragraph 193
[6] Framework paragraph 196