

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2016

by David Spencer BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 25 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/16/3153620

Maida Hill Post Office, 377 Harrow Road, London W9 ND

- 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 M Harsini against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 16/03230/FULL, dated 10 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is retention of existing shopfront and removal of existing shutter and shutter box.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the proposed shopfront and removal of existing shutter and shutter box at Maida Hill Post Office, 377 Harrow Road, London W9 3ND in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/03230/FULL dated 10 April 2016 and subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Dwg Nos. 23-04/MT (proposed plans) & 23-05/MT (site location and block plans).

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal proposal is retrospective and from my observations on site it has been implemented as per the plans before me, noting that the shutter removal has been the subject of a separate enforcement appeal¹. In allowing this appeal I have amended the description of the proposal to reflect that Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 refers to development in a future tense (i.e. the carrying out of building) rather than in reflective terms.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the shopfront on the character and appearance of the host building and the street scene within this part of Harrow Road.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located in a part of Harrow Road characterised by commercial and retail activity at the ground floor level of predominantly three storey buildings with what appears to be either residential or office use on the upper floors. The appeal location is a prospering local retail and service centre and at

¹ APP/X5990/C/14/2216480

the time of my site visit on a weekday mid-afternoon there was an appreciable pedestrian footfall and traffic flow adding to the bustling commercial ambiance.

5. No.377 Harrow Road is positioned within a long terrace of good quality three storey buildings with various commercial frontages along the ground floor level. I noted that there is reasonable uniformity to the width of the shop frontages and the positioning of fascia and various signage. There is some variety to the appearances of these ground floor frontages, including occasional traditional shopfronts. However, more modern examples with large glazed openings and plain aluminium clad framing comparable in design to the appeal proposal predominate, including shopfronts in the recognisable styles, cladding and colours of national and regional outlets. Directly opposite the appeal site are the large modern frontages to the Co-operative and Iceland supermarkets and both units directly adjoining the appeal site have broadly similar designs to the proposal before me. In this context I do not find the appeal proposal to have a harmful effect on either the appearance of the host building or the character of streetscene in this part of Harrow Road.
6. Whilst I note the appeal building is part of a solid Nineteenth Century terrace, I have very little evidence that the terrace, including No.377, is a building of townscape merit². Nor do I have persuasive evidence that it was a particularly good example of Twentieth Century Post Office architecture. Having regard to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)³ I am satisfied that the appeal building is not a non-designated heritage asset.
7. Whilst I accept that the previous shopfront was composed within original features of the building, I also note that some aspects such as stall riser panels, fanlights above doors and pilasters have been incorporated into the design of the appeal proposal which adds interest and avoids a bland frontage. However, the modern outlook of the appeal proposal is comparable to surrounding examples such that it is not harmfully incongruous. Whilst there is contrast with the plain appearance of the upper storeys, the same applies elsewhere on either side of the appeal site such that the appeal proposal is representative of its local context.
8. I therefore conclude that the shopfront does not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the host building and the street scene within this part of Harrow Road. Accordingly, the design objectives of Policy S28 of the Westminster City Plan and Policies DES1 and DES5 Westminster Unitary Development Plan 2007 would remain uncompromised. The proposal also accords with the objective of the National Planning Policy Framework to secure high quality design.
9. For the above reasons, and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should succeed. As the appeal proposal is retrospective the Local Planning Authority submits that there are no conditions they wish to impose. I generally agree although I consider a condition specifying the approved plans is necessary for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

David Spencer

Inspector.

² The LPA acknowledges this is not a Conservation Area or that the appeal building is on a local list.

³ PPG Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 18a-039-20140306 [particularly the second part of the paragraph].