

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 May 2017

by Alexander Walker MPlan MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23rd May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/17/3167161

31 Lisson Grove, London NW1 6UB

- 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 Miss Elisha Nathoo against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 16/08249/FULL, dated 24 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 29 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is the installation of replacement glazing on the building and the infilling of the corner of the building at ground floor level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. At the time of my site visit the proposed works had already been completed. I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Lisson Grove Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is located within the Lisson Grove Conservation Area (the CA) on the junction of Lisson Grove and Bell Street and has a frontage with both roads. Due to its corner plot location, the building is prominent in the streetscene, particularly when travelling northbound along Lisson Grove. The CA's character and appearance is generally comprised of a mix of uses that consists of residential terraces and large commercial and public buildings. The traditional terraced properties generally have narrow timber vertical sliding sash windows, whereas the more modern buildings typically have narrow metal frames. This detailing is generally consistent throughout the CA and makes a positive contribution its character and appearance.
5. The previous void at the entrance to the property has been infilled with aluminium doors and windows. The use of aluminium frames has ensured that the windows do not appear too bulky or crude. Furthermore, there is a wide variety of designs for ground floor commercial properties in the locality. Consequently, I do not consider that the proposed ground floor door and windows detract from the character or appearance of the CA.

6. Nevertheless, the upper floor windows that have been installed are uPVC and have three/six panes. As a result of the pane to window ratio and the trickle vents, the windows look cluttered, which detracts significantly from the simplistic design of the building's façade. This is further exacerbated by the thickness of the uPVC frames which appear heavy and inappropriately crude in comparison with the surrounding properties that have slender timber or metal frames.
7. The adjoining property, No 33-35 is also a relatively modern addition. Its pane to window proportions are far simpler, resulting in the panes appearing more square than rectangular. Based on the photographic evidence presented to me, the previous windows in the appeal building were similar to No 33-35, which created a pleasing cohesive relationship between the two properties and made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. The existing windows erode this relationship.
8. The window proportions do, to some extent, reflect the window detailing of traditional properties in the vicinity. However, the design of the building is clearly not traditional. Such detailing is inappropriate and appears incongruous on this contemporary building, detracting from the character and appearance of the CA.
9. During my site visit I had the opportunity to view the properties, referred to me by the appellant, that have uPVC windows installed. However, I do not consider that these windows make any positive contribution to the CA. The introduction of further uPVC windows, such as those that are the subject of this appeal, would only enhance the existing harm these windows have on the CA, diminishing the positive contributions that the slender traditional timber and metal windows make to the CA even further.
10. Whilst I appreciate that the proposed uPVC windows and doors provide improved thermal efficiency of the property this does not outweigh the harm the proposal has on the character and appearance of the CA.
11. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') confirms that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimal viable use. Whilst the harm to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial, there is no public benefit identified that would outweigh this harm.
12. I conclude therefore that the proposal fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Lisson Grove Conservation Area, contrary to Policies S25 and S28 of Westminster's City Plan, which state that Westminster's historic environment, including conservation areas, will be conserved and ensure that development incorporates exemplary standards of architecture. It also fails to comply with Saved Policies DES1, DES5 and DES9 of the City of Westminster Unitary Development Plan, which, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that development is of the highest architectural quality; is in scale with the existing building and its immediate setting; and, preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas and their settings.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Alexander Walker

INSPECTOR