



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 August 2017

by Nigel Harrison BA (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 05 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Y/17/3173467

Flat 4, 27 Craven Street, LONDON, WC2N 5NT

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Nicholas Bowen against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref: 16/07995/LBC dated 18 August 2016 was refused by notice dated 13 October 2016.
 - The works proposed are insertion of four rooflights in central pitches of roof and internal alterations at third floor level including partial removal of ceiling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for insertion of four rooflights in central pitches of roof and internal alterations at third floor level including partial removal of ceiling at Flat 4, 27 Craven Street, LONDON, WC2N 5NT in accordance with the terms of the application Ref: 16/07995/LBC dated 18 August 2016, subject to the conditions set out in the Schedule attached to this decision.

Procedural Matter

2. I have taken the description of the proposed works from the Council's decision notice. Although it differs from that given on the application form, I consider it more describes the full extent of the proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed works on the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building and the character and appearance of the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal concerns the third (top floor) flat of this late 18th century mid-terraced house, now concerted into flats, comprising part of the Grade II listed terrace 25-30 Craven Street.
5. Planning and listed building consent has already been granted for 4 No slim-profile rooflights to be installed within the central valley of the 'M'-pitched roof, and this scheme could be implemented. The Council is satisfied that these would not be visible from any reasonable location and would cause no harm to the external architectural interest of the building or have any impact on the conservation area.

6. Essentially the key difference between the approved and current schemes is in the amount of ceiling to be removed in order to allow light to be transferred from the rooflights to the living space below. The approved arrangement shows narrow enclosed light wells leading down from each rooflight and would involve removing four small square sections of the ceiling. In the current scheme it is proposed to remove large sections of ceiling (approximately 20 sqm and 50% of the total) thereby opening a view the roof void to the rooms below.
7. The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses, and for special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. National Planning Policy relating to conserving and enhancing the historic environment is set out in Section 12 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework).
8. Policies S25 (heritage) and S28 (design) of the *Westminster City Plan 2106* (WCP), and saved policies DES1 (principles of urban design and conservation) and DES10 (listed buildings) of the *Westminster Unitary Development Plan 2007* (UDP) are relevant. Amongst other matters UDP Policy DES1 says applications involving the alteration of a listed building must respect the listed building's character and appearance, and serve to preserve, restore or complement its features of special architectural or historic interest. The Council has also referred to its Supplementary Planning Guidance: *Repairs and Alterations to Listed Buildings*, adopted 1995 (SPG).
9. Although now altered internally to form flats, much of the building's significance derives from its evidential value as a Georgian town house, and its communal value as part of the terrace. The relatively unaltered front and rear elevations also contribute to that significance, as do the 'M' plan pitched slate roofs and the original (or old) roof timbers in the front section of the roof.
10. The application is supported by a comprehensive investigation of the roof voids and fabric and it seems likely that a significant proportion of the roof timbers are original or at least of considerable age. However, I note that these would be retained and the only historic fabric to be removed would be slate (to allow for the rooflights). Other fabric to be removed (roof battens, roofing felt and ceiling plasterboard) is relatively modern, and does not contribute to the special interest of the building.
11. The Council's main concerns relate to the 'vaulted' character which would arise following removal of sections of ceiling and the opening up of the roof void to the rooms below. It says houses of this date relied on flat ceilings to separate the loft void from the living space; and the thrust of its case appears to be that the loss of the existing spatial character and definition between occupied space and roof void would be harmful in terms of the significance of the building. However, I am not convinced that the current spatial arrangement with flat ceilings hiding the roof void contributes in any material way to the significance of the building. Furthermore, the retention of about 50% of the existing ceilings towards the front, rear and walls would ensure that some concept of separation between the living and loft space is retained.
12. The proposed works also involve the removal of a short section of the partition wall which currently divides the living and kitchen areas. However, the

underlying fabric is not historic, and the Council has raised no objections to its removal. I find no reason to disagree.

13. Overall, I consider the proposal represents an acceptable design solution that would be sympathetic to the character of the building whilst allowing more light into the flat, and a less oppressive feel to the living room and bedroom. I therefore conclude that the proposed works would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade II listed building. As the proposed works (other than the already permitted roof lights) are internal, I am also satisfied that the character and appearance of the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area would be preserved. I find no conflict with policies of the Framework, WCP Policies S25 and S28, saved UDP Policies DES1 and DES10, and advice in the SPG.

Conditions and Conclusion

14. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council in the light of the advice in the *Planning Practice Guidance*. A condition is needed to secure compliance with the submitted plans in the interests of proper planning. The conditions requiring all new works to match the existing, and for existing fabric to be retained (unless noted otherwise in the approved drawings) are all needed to safeguard the building's special architectural and historic interest.
15. Therefore, for the reasons given above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Nigel Harrison

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 27CS/101/1 (floor plan showing all to be removed); 27CS/102/1 (floor plan showing area of ceiling to be removed); 27CS/204/1 (sections AA and BB); 27CS/204A/1 (sections CC and DD); 27CS/204/D (typical section); 27CS/205/1 (roof plan showing position of glazed units); 27CS/207/1 (relation of roof lights to remaining timbers); 27CS/662/A/1 (inset double-glazed units-area of ceiling to be retained); 27CS/662/B/1 (inset double-glazed units); and 27CS/662/C1 (inset glazed units -relationship with exposed beams).
- 3) All new works and improvements inside the building must be finished to match the existing adjacent work with regard to the choice of materials, colour, material, texture, profile and finished appearance, unless otherwise shown on the plans approved under this consent.
- 4) All existing ornamental features including chimney pieces, plasterwork, architraves, panelling, doors and staircase balustrades shall be retained unless noted otherwise in the plans approved under this consent, and be protected during the construction period.