The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 July 2019

by G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/K5600/W/19/3227300
2, 3 and 4 Hereford Square, London SW7 4TT

- 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 Messrs. Day, Shanahan and Marston against the decision of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- The application Ref PP/18/05344, dated 29 August 2018, was refused by notice dated 25 October 2018.
- The development proposed is the installation of painted stucco render to front elevations of houses.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of painted stucco render to front elevations of houses at 2, 3 and 4 Hereford Square, London SW7 4TT in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PP/18/05344, dated 29 August 2018, subject to the following conditions:

   1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

   2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: -1007/01, 1007/14 and 1007/15.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area; including the Queen's Gate Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises three houses which form part of a terrace to the south side of Hereford Square. The traditional square with a central garden is bound on three side by large stucco terraced properties. In contrast, Nos 1-5 Hereford Square are 1950s dwellings built to replace those destroyed in the war. The properties are of a simple form and whilst No 5 and part of No 1 have subsequently been rendered the others are brick. The adjoining properties which complete the terrace (Nos 6-9 Hereford Square) are large stucco properties in line with the rest of the square. At the time of the planning application these were being considered for listing, however the decision was that the properties did not meet the criteria for listing.

Conservation Area

4. The square lies on the edge of the Queen's Gate Conservation Area which is a mixture of principal terraces, small scale mews and museums together with some more modern buildings. The large and formal principal terraces have an elegant and consistent form. Hereford Square with its prominent terrace buildings is representative of this form, together with a central garden providing a verdant quality to the square.

5. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a conservation area.

6. The main parties agree that the existing properties make a neutral contribution to the conservation area. I concur with that assessment. Whilst the Council indicate that they strongly disagree that the conservation area and the listed buildings are currently harmed by the existing materiality of the site, the appellant refers to the Queen's Gate Conservation Area Proposals Statement (CAPS) which indicates that there has been some loss to principal terraces due to war damage, and names Hereford Square as an example. In this regard it states that "*replacement buildings have not been in harmony with the traditional character of the area".* Reflective of the architecture of the time Nos 2 - 4 are clearly distinctive in form and materials to the rest of the square.

7. It is, however accepted by the appellant that the site makes a modest contribution to the historic interest of the area by illustrating the square's morphology. I accept that retaining the brickwork would maintain the original design, however, these buildings are not listed, and the brickwork is not particularly unique. Furthermore, the Council accept that the building could be painted. This would have a similar effect to the render, although I agree with the appellant that the appearance would be inferior, and it would be an external appearance which is not exhibited in Hereford Square.

8. The CAPS does emphasise the uniformity of terraces and whilst reference is made to not permitting rendering or painting to those few terraces which have brick facades this is in relation to the principal terraces. It goes on to suggest that where a terrace is decorated uniformly, this pattern should be kept to rigidly.

9. The parties have suggested why the buildings were not originally rendered, although this is based on assertions rather than specific evidence relating to these properties. I acknowledge that there are different approaches to conservation, however I do not find the alterations sought would be harmful. The render will aid the harmonisations of Nos 2-4 with the principal terraces, nevertheless the building form, fenestration and detailing of the post-war period would still be apparent. As such, contrary to the Council's position I do not find the development would result in a stark hybrid that poorly mimics the neighbouring historic buildings.

10. In my opinion the provision of stucco to the front elevation would bring with it an element of cohesion to both the terrace and the square. This would not be of such significance to be an enhancement, however the impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area would be preserved.

Accordingly, I find no conflict with policy CL3 of the Local Plan[1] which requires development to preserve and to take opportunities to enhance the cherished and familiar local scene. Similarly, I find no conflict with Local Plan policies CL1, CL2, CL6 and CL9 which require alterations to be of design quality and to have respect for the local context.

Listed Buildings

11. The properties along the western and northern sides of the square are grade II listed buildings (10-23 and 27-35 Hereford Square). The physical relationship with these buildings would be unchanged. Sited at one end of the square the visual relationship between Nos 2-4 and the facing terrace is at some distance across the landscaped square.

12. Nos 1-5 are slightly set back behind Nos 6-9 which exhibit features of projecting porches and balconies. As such, the straightforward and reduced scale of the appeal properties have a level of subservience to the listed buildings. In views across the square the notable element from the change to the materials would be the colour, which would be consistent with the listed buildings. In my view this would neither elevate the status of these buildings nor reduce the significance of the listed buildings. Consequently, I do not find the setting of the listed buildings would be adversely affected.

13. Therefore, in accordance with the clear expectations of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the settings of the listed buildings and the group they form would be preserved. Thus, I find no conflict with Local Plan policy CL4 which seeks to protect the heritage significance of listed buildings.

14. Local Plan policy CL 11 which relates to views is also referenced in the decision notice. The Council have not identified any specific views, however having regard to the general views in to and across the square and my conclusions on the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area I am satisfied that there would be no harm to local views of the square.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed, and planning permission granted subject to conditions requiring compliance with the statutory timeframe and approved plans for certainty.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR

[1] The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Consolidated Local Plan 2015