

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2019

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

Decision date: 22 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/19/3227075

Parliament Square, London SW1P 3JX

- 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 Sir Neil Thorne against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 17/04187/FULL, dated 12 May 2017, was refused by notice dated 23 October 2018.
 - The development proposed is new memorial statue and plinth.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Reasons

2. The proposed new memorial statue would be of Emmeline Pankhurst, a leading activist in the suffragette movement. It would be located on Canning Green, a landscaped area on the west side of Parliament Square, midway between statues of Abraham Lincoln and George Canning. The proposed statue, and plinth, would be similar in scale to the two existing statues and the Council has not expressed any concerns with the design of the proposed statue. Concerns regarding the design of the plinth could be addressed by imposing a condition.
3. Saved policy DES 7 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) encourages the provision of public art and statuary in the City. But there are many statues in Parliament Square and in the wider area and the Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Statues and Monuments in Westminster', which provides guidance on the erection of new monuments, identifies a Monument Saturation Zone (MSZ) where applications for new statues will not be permitted unless there is an exceptionally good reason.
4. Canning Green is within the MSZ and the Council claims that the site of the proposed statue is probably the last available space for a new monument or statue in Parliament Square. The main issue is therefore whether there is an exceptionally good reason for the proposed statue of Emmeline Pankhurst.
5. There is an existing statue of Emmeline Pankhurst in Victoria Tower Gardens close to the south elevation of the Palace of Westminster. Consideration was given to the relocation of this statue to the more prominent location of Canning Green but this was not pursued because the existing statue is, as indicated by the Appellant, "...massively under scaled by comparison..." with the statues of Lincoln and Canning. A statue of Millicent Fawcett, a leading activist in the suffragist movement, was unveiled in Parliament Square in April 2018.

6. The circumstances that led to the erection of the statue of Millicent Fawcett in Parliament Square are not relevant considerations. Neither is the previously investigated possibility that the statue of Emmeline Pankhurst could be relocated to a site remote from Parliament Square.

7. The suffragette movement and the suffragist movement are both commemorated, and the suffrage cause is therefore twice commemorated, by statues close to the Houses of Parliament. Emmeline Pankhurst is certainly an important figure in the nation's history, and the existing statue may not properly reflect her importance, but there is no justification for her to be commemorated again in the vicinity of Parliament by the erection of the proposed statue on Canning Green. Furthermore, locations for commemorative statues are a finite resource in Parliament Square and allowing the appeal would deny the opportunity for commemorating a worthy person, who is not already commemorated, in the future.

8. For the aforementioned reasons there is no exceptionally good reason for permitting the erection of the proposed statue of Emmeline Pankhurst on Canning Green. The proposed development thus conflicts with the SPD. The erection of the statue, without good reason, would undermine the heritage status of Parliament Square and would thus conflict with saved UDP policy DES 7 and with policy S25 of Westminster's City Plan.

9. The letters of support for the proposed statue of Emmeline Pankhurst have been taken into account but they do not outweigh the planning considerations that have led to the conclusion that planning permission must be withheld for a new memorial statue and plinth in Parliament Square, London.

John Braithwaite

Inspector