



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2020 by C Brennan BAE (Hons) M.PLAN

Decision by Andrew Owen BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/19/3240982

Rodney Court, 6-8 Maida Vale, London W9 1TQ

- 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 Princecliff Ltd against the decision of Westminster City Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01143/FULL, dated 11 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 June 2019.
 - The proposed development is installation of external steel support structure as repair of defective walkway to rear (south east) elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site accommodates a seven-storey block of residential flats on the eastern side of Maida Vale. On the south east elevation, external concrete cantilevered walkways with railings provide a secondary means of access and escape for the occupants of the upper floor flats. The horizontal emphasis of the walkways and railings is a distinctive characteristic within this elevation which establishes a clear sense of uniformity and coherence. During my site visit, I observed that the first, second and third floor walkways were supported by propping. I also saw some cracking and infilling underneath sections of these walkways, which likely relate to the water damage cited by the appellant.
 5. The proposed five supporting beams would extend from ground-floor level to the third-floor external walkway and would be positioned evenly across this section of the south east elevation. As each beam would have a thickness of around 0.2m and a width of roughly 0.1m, they would have a much thicker and more prominent appearance than the existing railings and as such would contrast poorly with them. Furthermore, as each beam would be sited in front of the external walkways, they would have a particularly obtrusive appearance
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which, whilst not apparent within public views, would appear prominent within private views from the rear-facing windows of properties fronting Hamilton Terrace to the east and the rear-facing windows of Winterton House to the south. The structure would fail to integrate with the appeal property and would erode the character and coherence of this elevation, especially when considered alongside the upper floor walkways which would be left unaltered. The potential for applying a coloured finish to the proposed beams would not overcome the above concerns. As such, the proposed beams would appear as insensitive and overtly utilitarian additions that would harm the character and appearance of the appeal property and would detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

6. I acknowledge that development in the surrounding area is varied in terms of scale and design and that the appeal property is neither listed nor set within a conservation area. However, I have nonetheless found that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, and the fact that there have been no objections to the proposal, which would cause minimal disruption to the occupants of the upper floor flats, does not outweigh that harm.
7. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. The proposed development would therefore conflict with Policy S28 of the Westminster City Plan (2016) and Saved Policies DES1 of the Unitary Development Plan (2007) (UDP) which together state that development must be of the highest architectural design, and UDP Saved Policy DES5 which states that alterations and extensions must reflect the style and details of the existing building.

Other Matters

8. A number of other structural options to address the failing walkways have been considered by the appellants including a like for like replacement of the cantilevered structure, gallows brackets, and a beam structure incorporated into the walkways instead of standing proud as that currently proposed. All have been dismissed for reasons of engineering practicality, cost, or disruption to the residents. However, I have no substantive evidence of this, and in any case I do not consider that any other of the above considerations provides justification for the identified harm that would result from the proposal before me.
9. The appellant states that there will be need for structural support for all of the external walkways at Rodney Court in due course. Regardless, I have considered the proposal before me solely on its own merits.

Conclusion and Recommendation

10. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Brennan

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

11. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR