



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 March 2021

by William Cooper BA (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Y/20/3257178

18 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA

- 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 Lady The Dowager Viscountess Rothermere against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref: 20/02180/LBC, dated 23 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 May 2020.
 - The works proposed are interior wall upholstery to rooms located at ground and first floors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for interior wall upholstery to rooms located at ground and first floors at 18 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA in accordance with the terms of the application, 20/02180/LBC, dated 23 March 2020, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works hereby consented shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The works hereby consented relate solely to the plans, drawings, notes and written details submitted with the application or as subsequently amended and approved in writing by the following conditions.
 - 3) No works shall commence until details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the wall upholstery have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and samples and retained thereafter.
 - 4) The materials to be used for making good disturbed internal surfaces shall be of matching composition, form and finish to those of any adjoining, original fabric.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the proposal relates to a listed building and is in a conservation area, I have had special regard to section 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
3. None of the parties expresses a view that the proposal would harm the character or appearance of the Birdcage Walk Conservation Area (CA), in which the building is located. Given the interior and reversible nature of the proposed

works, I am satisfied that they would preserve the character and appearance of the CA.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade I listed building, 'Nos. 14-22, 22A and 24, Queen Anne's Gate' (Ref: 1227298), or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

5. The listed building is located among a concentration of Grade I listed buildings on Queen Anne's Gate. It comprises a group of Georgian town houses that have four storeys plus basements and dormered mansards. Common features include bowed rear elevations which overlook St James's Park. Interiors include original ceilings in delicate Adam style, statuary marble chimney pieces and panelled shutters. The listed building is a fine example of late eighteenth century design with well-preserved interior elements. The appeal property is in use as a family dwelling. The interiors in this case retain original proportions, joinery, chimney pieces and ceiling plasterwork.
6. Given the above, I consider the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the historic legibility and fabric of the interior fixtures and fittings of the Georgian building.
7. The areas of wall upon which fabric hangings would be applied are decorated with emulsion paint. The proposal would entail fabric wall hangings in two spacious reception rooms with large windows that overlook St James's Park. One of these rooms is on the ground floor and another on the first floor. The proposal would also entail fabric wall hanging in a front room on the ground floor which looks onto Queen Anne's Gate. The upholstery would be held in place by a grid of timber battens fixed to the walls by staples.
8. The evidence before me indicates that as the Georgian period progressed, a range of factors influenced whether wealthier London households continued with fabric wall hangings or embraced the emerging vogue for wallpaper. On one hand, ease of hanging and resilience to coal smoke from fireplaces made wallpaper appealing. On the other, the 'grandeur' of fabric wall hangings contributed to the appeal of fabric in some properties during the eighteenth century and later.
9. Furthermore, the main parties describe the use of fabric wall hangings at No 14 Queen Anne's Gate, which forms part of the listed building. While there is a step down in building scale from Nos 14 and 16 to Nos 18 to 24 Queen Anne's Gate (even numbers), the townhouses within the listed building continue to share a relative grandeur of scale and location, being prestigiously situated in Westminster, close to St James's Palace and parliament, with views over St James's Park.
10. The above indicates that there was some fluidity and variety in the choice of domestic interior wall decoration materials during the Georgian period. While wallpaper had an apparently growing practical appeal in London and elsewhere, fabric wall hangings were used in 'grander' Georgian properties.
11. The appeal rooms are of high importance in the classical hierarchy of the house and merit high quality decoration. Within the above context and given the

grandiose nature of the listed building, the proposed use of fabric as a wallcovering material would not be inauthentic.

12. Moreover, given the modest 6mm depth of proposed battens, the sense of the rooms' spatial character would not be diminished. Existing cornices, dado rails and, in the larger reception rooms, panelling would maintain their visual influence. The proposal would also retain original joinery, fire surrounds and ceiling plasterwork as prominent interior features. The exact specification of the wall upholstery is to be finalised and can be secured by planning condition, to ensure that it is authentic to the Georgian period and respects the prominence of the retained historic interior features described above. Furthermore, the staples would leave small holes that could easily be repaired. The proposed wall decor would be reversible. Prestigious vistas would continue to contribute to how the historic character of the building is appreciated from within the appeal rooms. Consequently, the historic legibility and fabric of the interior architecture of the building would endure.
13. Given the above, I conclude that the proposal would preserve the special interest of the Grade I listed building. This would satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework. Also, while of limited relevance to an appeal made under section 20 of the Act, it would accord with Policies S25 and S28 of the Westminster City Plan (2016) and Policies DES1 and DES10 of the City of Westminster Unitary Development Plan (2007), which seek to ensure that proposals conserve designated heritage assets and the historic environment. Furthermore, as the proposal would preserve the integrity of the listed building and retain features of interest it would not conflict with paragraphs 5.4 and 6.18 of the City of Westminster Repairs and Alterations to Listed Buildings Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Conclusion and Conditions

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that, subject to conditions, the appeal should be allowed. The attached conditions are reasonable and necessary in the circumstances of this case, in accordance with the tests set out in paragraph 56 of the Framework.
15. In addition to the standard time limit condition, a condition requiring the works to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details is necessary to ensure that they are implemented as approved. A condition covering submission of samples and the use of specified materials is necessary to ensure that the wall upholstery is of a suitably high standard. In order to preserve historic architectural detail a condition requiring the making good of any disturbed surfaces is also necessary.

William Cooper

INSPECTOR