



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 March 2021

by T J Burnham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V5570/W/20/3257522

14-16 Meredith Street, Islington, London EC1R 0AB

- 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 Ms Joanne Morley (Microbiology Society) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Islington.
 - The application Ref P2019/2861/FUL, dated 24 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 28 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is the installation of an external platform access lift to provide wheelchair access into the premises and associated alterations to the façade of the building including replacing glazed screen with opening pair of doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed. Planning permission is granted for the installation of an external platform access lift to provide wheelchair access into the premises and associated alterations to the façade of the building including replacing glazed screen with opening pair of doors at 14-16 Meredith Street, Islington, London EC1R 0AB in accordance with the terms of the application Ref P2019/2861/FUL dated 24 September 2019 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: 2270-CAL-XX-XX-DR-A-100-S4, 2270-CAL-XX-XX-DR-A-106-S4, 2270-CAL-XX-XX-DR-A-112-S4, 2270-CAL-XX-GF-DR-A-105-S4, GA-02-(PL2), 2270-CAL-XX-XX-DR-A-111-S4 & GA-01-(PL2).
 - 3) For the hereby approved development the lift will be a Phoenix 'The Rise' platform lift, as specified on drawing numbers GA-01-(PL2), GA-02-(PL2), and 2270-CAL-XX-XX-DR-A-111-S4.
 - 4) For the hereby approved development the metal railings and gate shall be painted black in colour and shall match the existing railings around the perimeter of the lightwell.
 - 5) Prior to the commencement of the development, a scheme detailing the manner in which the lift and its associated doors and gates will operate which shall also include details of the extent of railings adjacent to the lift and pedestrian footway shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The lift shall

thereafter operate in line with the provisions of the agreed scheme for the lifetime of the development.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the proposal has been altered from the application form to the decision notice. That on the application form adequately describes the proposal and I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the accessibility of the building and on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Accessibility

4. The evidence indicates that whilst the premises have good levels of accessibility internally, due to being unable to gain access into the building some members of the society's committee have to attend meetings elsewhere.
5. The main lobby of the building presents some challenges in terms of improving accessibility into the building from the street. It is set half a floor above pavement level up a flight of steps while a lightwell serving windows on the lower floor occupies a large part of the frontage of the building. Further, the building is set only a short distance back from the street. These factors inevitably constrain the accessibility of the building.
6. SPD¹ guidance in relation to lifts and stairs appears to relate to design solutions within buildings and it is questionable whether the advice is intended to be directly applied to an external platform access lift. However, broad principles can be taken from this guidance and the size of the lift car proposed exceeds the minimum size recommended.
7. I note the concerns around the practicalities of negotiating the lift while using a wheelchair. However, subject to some re-working of the access gate and railing arrangement to the side of the entrance of the lift there would appear to be the possibility of providing a 1.5 x 1.5m turning/landing area subject to some thoughtful consideration of the operation of the lift and the extent of surrounding railings.
8. The lack of a landing at the top of the lift prior to entering the building would not be ideal, although it should be possible to address this matter should the automatic doors operate carefully in conjunction with the door on the lift. Importantly, the plans indicate that users of the lift would arrive in the same open plan lobby as those using the existing stair access.
9. The consideration as to whether there may be other more optimal solutions in relation to accessibility into the building is logical. In this respect, an access report has also been submitted alongside the appeal. It concludes that the option before me is the only viable option to improve the situation at the site. The evidence indicates that the lift would largely be used by members of the societies committee who would be repeat visitors and therefore would be able

¹ Inclusive Design in Islington Supplementary Planning Document February 2014.

to gain familiarity with its operation. This somewhat differentiates the site from, for example, a busy public building.

10. To conclude on this matter, the proposal would be likely to improve access to the building where it is currently unavailable to some. It would therefore accord with Policy DM2.2 of the Islington Council Development Management Policies (2013) (DMP), one of the driving aims of which is to promote accessibility for all. I have not found conflict with SPD guidance.

Character and appearance

11. I accept that there is a strong building line to the front of the appeal site which is largely carried through on the neighbouring properties. However, there are features which punctuate this, including stairwell housing on the building to the north east and walls and railings of a significant height extending forwards of the building line in front of the host building and that closely to the south west. These project a similar distance to the proposed lift.
12. Within this context, the lift, which would be of similar height to the taller brick walls, would read as an ancillary addition, rather than an extension of the building itself. The dark finish would also be complementary of the existing dark finishes on the windows, doors, railings, rainwater goods and signage. To conclude on this matter the lift would not therefore appear significantly out of context or character and would not significantly harm the appearance of the building. As a result, there would be no harm to the character and appearance of the area.
13. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy DM2.1 of the DMP and Policy CS 8 of Islington's Core Strategy (2011) (CS) which require high quality design that is appropriate to the character of the area. I have also not identified conflict with SPD² guidance where it relates to building lines. I have not found conflict with Policy CS 7 of the CS which outlines the spatial strategy for the Bunhill and Clerkenwell area.

Conditions

14. In addition to the standard three-year time limit for commencement, I have imposed a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans in the interests of certainty. A condition limits the lift to the type proposed while one relates to the colour of the railings and gate. Both are necessary in the interests of the character and appearance of the area. A condition relating to the exact operation of the lift and associated doors and gates which shall also include details of the extent of railings adjacent to the lift and footway is necessary to ensure that the lift is as user friendly as it possibly can be.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons above, the appeal should therefore be allowed.

T J Burnham

INSPECTOR

² Islington Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document January 2017.