



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 July 2021

by Patrick Whelan BA(Hons) Dip Arch MA MSc ARB RIBA RTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/21/3268352

Optichic Optician, 83 Bishop's Bridge Road, London W2 6BG

- 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 Mr Yorgo Mansi against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 19/07940/FULL, dated 13 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 4 January 2021.
 - The development is a replacement shopfront.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a replacement shopfront at Optichic Optician, 83 Bishop's Bridge Road, London W2 6BG, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/07940/FULL, dated 13 October 2019, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Plan produced 20 November 2020; 1123-30-100 Rev.- PREWORKS & AS BUILT PLAN; 1123-30-201 Rev.- AS BUILT ELEVATION; 1123-X-200 Rev.- PREWORKS ELEVATION; PREWORKS AND AS BUILT SHOPFRONT (NO CHANGE).

Preliminary Matters

2. The development appeared to be complete at the time of my visit. For clarity, the description of the development has been taken from the decision notice.

Main Issue

3. This is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the Queensway Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. Being highly visible, the shopfront clearly maintains the retail character of the shopping parade of which it is a small part. It would preserve the character of the CA which is significant for the attractive intensity of hustle and bustle into and around the buildings which enclose these streets with the rich animation of human interaction and activity.
 5. The Art Deco appearance of this block of flats with a ground floor parade of shops is distinctive for its clean lines and simple but quality detailing. Its stone-faced base with piers separates the fronts in its ground floor. The muscular base supports the mass brickwork containing the flats above, which is in turn punctuated by ladder windows in projecting reveals, and slender
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balconies projecting from its splayed face. As a prominent, corner building, the quality of its townscape and its architectural influence contributes to the historic and architectural significance of the CA.

6. In the elevation to Bishop's Bridge Road, only the restaurant front on the corner retains fluted piers and a stone stallriser, its signage incorporated sensitively onto the stone frieze above the delicate framing of its modulating windows holding small, individual panes of glass. To varying degrees, the other fronts in this elevation have introduced fascia boards either onto or below the stone frieze and there is barely one trace of a stallriser among them. Of those shops with framed fronts, their boxy, aluminium profiles and their arrangement has little in common with the more streamline profiles and consistent order in the distinctive windows above them and in the corner restaurant.
7. Moreover, the arrangement of the framing in the framed fronts lacks internal rationality, and coherence between individual fronts. For instance, glass external corners in the splayed corner front; the lack of symmetry from the central door in the front adjoining this front which had a side door; frames running ground to fascia, others incorporating single or even double transom lights; doors varying from fully glazed to having solid mid-rails.
8. While the Council insists that shopfronts should have frames as opposed to glass as here, what is important to the architectural character of the CA is the sensitivity of the shopfront to the design of the building of which it is a part, and its degree of coherence with the other fronts in the building.
9. Of the fronts in this elevation, four were framed, one was glass, and one was stone with windows. This development has changed a framed front to one almost entirely of glass. I appreciate that glass fronts can lack architectural character and enclosure. However, the neutrality of those installed here has calmed the architectural freneticism of the different framed approaches in this elevation.
10. Moreover, being one of what appears as two, half-width shops, the subdivision and differentiation already provide a degree of enclosure. The glass front itself is detailed sensitively with no singular stand-out element, not unlike the other glass front in this elevation, and the other glass fronts in Queensway in this CA, which has retained few traditional shopfronts.
11. In the context of the other glass shopfronts in the CA, including in this parade, as well as the unusually, limited breadth of this shopfront, I find no harm from the development to the character or the appearance of the CA, to the desirability of the preservation or enhancement of which I am required to pay special attention.
12. For the reasons above, the development sustains the significance of the heritage asset in accordance with paragraph 192 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Nor does it conflict with policies 38, 39 and 40 of the City Plan 2019-2040. As well as protecting CAs and seeking exemplary standards of high-quality design, these policies require development to be sensitively designed, having regard to the prevailing character, materials, architectural quality, and degree of uniformity in the surrounding townscape.

Conditions and conclusion

13. For the avoidance of doubt, I have imposed a condition requiring the development to accord with the approved plans. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

Patrick Whelan

INSPECTOR