



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 20 September 2022

by Mr JP Sargent BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/22/3294772

24 Bloomfield Terrace, London SW1W 8PQ

- 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 & Mrs Roberts against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 21/08466/FULL, dated 12 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is a part basement extension, a lower ground floor rear extension, ground floor rear infill extension, and a first floor part width rear extension, replacement windows, rearrangement of the vaults under the front paving and internal refurbishment, as well as external air conditioning units in the rear garden.
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Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Y/22/3294775

24 Bloomfield Terrace, London SW1W 8PQ

- 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 Mr & Mrs Roberts against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 21/08467/LBC, dated 12 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 March 2022.
 - The works proposed are a part basement extension, a lower ground floor rear extension, ground floor rear infill extension, and a first floor part width rear extension, replacement windows, rearrangement of the vaults under the front paving and internal refurbishment, as well as external air conditioning units in the rear garden.
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Decisions

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/22/3294772

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Y/22/3294775

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

3. Although not included in the descriptions on the application forms, the proposal clearly involves a ground floor infill extension, as identified in the submissions and the decision notices, and I have referred to it in the descriptions above.

Main Issues

4. The main issue with these appeals is whether the works would harm the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade II listed building, whether they would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the Belgravia

Conservation Area, and whether they would harm the significance of either of these designated heritage assets.

Reasons

5. No 24 is one of a number of dwellings that, together, make up a Grade II listed terrace, which dates from the early 19th Century. The special architectural and historic interest of the terrace as a whole lie, to a great extent, in its external treatments. The scale and arrangement of the frontage, its window and door detailing, and the overall uniformity it displays, reflect the building's age and style. Although the rear elevation is plainer, the windows on this side again respect and demonstrate when the terrace was built and the style used, while the presence of a closet wing illustrates, to some degree, the functioning of the building. Originally at least, the arrangement of these features would have created a strong rhythm and uniformity on this side of the terrace as well. The appellants' dwelling very much displays these elements of special architectural and historic interest, and contributes to the sense of rhythm. Despite the external value of the building, internally the original plan form of the appeal property is still apparent despite alterations, and indicates the scale and nature of the accommodation it offered. Accordingly, the significance of the wider terrace and of No 24 in particular is historic and architectural.
6. The terrace is in the Belgravia Conservation Area, which covers an extensive area of residential development laid out in the early part of the 19th Century. While there is a high degree of individuality among the properties, they also share much in terms of their scale, their proportions, their form and their siting close to the pavement. This gives the area's character and appearance a sense of cohesiveness and unity, which adds to its significance as a designated heritage asset. Because of its scale, form, siting and design, the terrace makes a positive contribution to the conservation area's significance.
7. I raise no objections to the creation of the basement. That element would not have a bearing on the historic significance of the building, and I am aware of no conflict with Policy 45 in the *City Plan 2019-2040*, which concerns such forms of development. Similarly, the alterations to the front vaults and the connecting porch raise no concerns in heritage terms, given what is there now. Internally, the lower ground floor has already been opened up to some extent, and so I find no harm would result to the plan form as a consequence of its further extension into the proposed rear addition. Similarly, at ground floor level the returns that would be retained on the line of the existing rear elevation would allow its original arrangement to be perceived. I have no evidence to show that the internal changes on the upper floors or the replacement of the staircase would adversely affect the historic significance of the building.
8. However, the rearward projection of the lower ground floor extension would be significantly greater than other additions and wings on the terrace, while its lantern rooflight would mean it would be relatively tall. I consider it would not be a light-weight structure. Rather, it would be a noticeable feature and, given its prominence and projection, I find it would be appreciably at odds with the established character and appearance of the terrace's rear elevation. Similarly the ground floor infill extension would erode the presence of the closet wing, which I consider to be an integral part of how this building would have originally operated. Finally, the addition of the first floor conservatory would be

of a similar scale to the closet wing. However, despite this I consider it would be a further discordant and alien element that would not respect the wing's ancillary, functional character. This is because of its lantern roof and its 2 sizeable windows side-by-side.

9. Taken together, I am of the view that these extensions would overwhelm the rear elevation, so diminishing an understanding of the building, and concealing and removing the contribution it makes to its special architectural and historic interest. Furthermore, by harming a listed building in this way, I am also of the view that the scheme would preserve neither the character nor the appearance of the conservation area. Harm, albeit less than substantial, would be caused to the significance of both of these designated heritage assets.
10. In coming to this view, I have noted a variety of extensions elsewhere on the building at other properties. Some, such as the ground floor extension at the adjoining neighbour to the north, are clearly subservient features that allow the original form still to be read. Others though serve to re-enforce the concerns I have about the effect of the proposal on the historic integrity of the building. Furthermore, a number had been extended in ways that are similar to elements of the works before me, but few if any had been so comprehensively enlarged. Therefore, those other works do not offer justification for further harm. Views of the additions would be limited, but they would still be apparent from surrounding properties. Indeed, the visibility from the public domain is not, in my opinion, a key test when considering the impact on a listed building. Consequently, these matters do not lead me to different findings.
11. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) says that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, with any harm to its significance requiring clear and convincing justification. It adds that if less than substantial harm is identified to a designated heritage asset, it should be weighed against the scheme's public benefits.
12. I accept that upgrading or improving a listed building could be perceived as a public benefit. However, as there is nothing before me to show that the future residential use of the property is in doubt if the works were not allowed, this would not constitute a clear and convincing justification for the scheme, and would not outweigh this long-term harm to the building and the conservation area that would result from the works.
13. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade II listed building, and would not preserve the character or appearance of the Belgravia Conservation Area, causing less than substantial harm to the significance of both of these designated heritage assets. In the absence of any clear and convincing justification for the works and any public benefits to outweigh this harm, the proposal would conflict with Policies 38, 39 and 40 in the *City Plan 2019-2040*, which together broadly seek development that safeguards the City's historic environment, and also with the Framework.

Conclusion

14. I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

JP Sargent INSPECTOR