The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2022

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/D/22/3303391
27a Randolph Mews, London, W9 1AN

- 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 Daniel Pittack against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
- The application Ref 22/00909/FULL, dated 9 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2022.
- The development proposed is described as 'the refurbishment, remodelling and single storey roof extension to the existing building to provide spaces for the Client's family needs'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building and the area, including the Maida Vale Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is within the Maida Vale Conservation Area (MVCA). The statutory duty set out in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

4. The appeal site is towards the southern end of the MVCA, which is heavily influenced by the form of the canal. Buildings are uniformly arranged into fine formal terraces and semi-detached pairs fronting broad streets. Many are finished in stucco, with various repeated embellishments such as porches, ironwork and pediments. These characteristics give the area a high quality and strong consistent identity.

5. The appeal building is somewhat of an anomaly in this context. It fronts Randolph Mews, which is a modest secondary street lined with mid-20th century dwellings. It is brick faced with painted metal windows with arched heads that are broad at first floor level. Along with the building's two storey height and flat roof, these characteristics result in something that contrasts clearly with the tall buildings that front the adjacent streets with their strong vertical emphasis.

6. However, this contrast is not without merit. The building was constructed in the 1880s as an electricity substation, which demonstrates the affluence of the area when private electricity supplies would have been first introduced. Its use

makes sense of its secondary position away from the main streets; however, its design was still carefully considered despite its industrial function. It has an ornate appearance and is referred to in the submissions before me as a complete composition, which is easily appreciated along Randolph Mews where its three principal elevations can be seen. From the southwest end of Randolph Mews, the building can be seen in part behind the modern dwelling to the southwest where it gives some variety to the streetscene. From the northeast end it draws the eye through the archway. For these reasons it contributes to the character and appearance of the MVCA as a result of its architectural value and the interest derived from an understanding of its original function.

7. The proposal would see the addition of a substantial roof extension. It would be set in from the sides of the existing building and would thus be clear of important features such as the three northwest facing arches. The proposal would utilise a material palette that would be similarly coloured yet different enough to distinguish it from the existing building. Each face would be arranged into a series of arches to pick up on the form of the building's original openings. In these respects it is clear that the design approach has been carefully considered.

8. However, the arched division of each face of the extension would add to its prominence and would give it a particularly heavy and cluttered appearance on the side elevations where the arches would be more densely spaced than the corresponding window openings below. This would be exacerbated by the blank infills of most of the arches. These would be finished with perforated corten panels and as a result most of the extension would have a solid appearance which would be at odds with the extent of glazing on the elevations below.

9. The extension would have a significant impact on the simple form of the existing building, which has a sense of architectural completeness. The extension would erode the visual simplicity of the existing parapet arrangement and would be a prominent addition.

10. Its harmful impact would be experienced in views along Randolph Mews, and at the points where the building is glimpsed at either end of the Mews. From nearby on Randolph Road the form of the extension and material would draw the eye and appear entirely at odds with the traditional materials of the existing building and the refined stucco façades of the nearby villas.

11. The proposed southeast elevation of the extension would sit behind the neighbour's outbuilding. It would not be visible from the public realm; however, its plain appearance would be seen from the rear of a number of neighbouring dwellings where it would appear at odds with the well articulated appearance of most of the buildings in the area.

12. The proposal would thus harm the character and appearance of the existing building and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of this part of the MVCA. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the harm that I have identified would be less than substantial. Paragraph 202 of the Framework establishes that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

13. The proposal would increase the habitable accommodation of the dwelling, and there would be some economic benefits arising from the construction process. However, given the scale of the proposal, and the generous layout of the

existing dwelling, I am satisfied that these benefits should only be given modest weight.

14. I give the harm I have identified considerable importance and weight in accordance with paragraph 199 of the Framework, which establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset. In this context I find that the limited public benefits of the proposal are not sufficient to outweigh the degree of harm identified.

15. In summary, I find that the proposal would fail to meet the requirements of the LBCA as it would harm the character and appearance of the building and would thus fail to preserve the character and appearance of the MVCA for the reasons given. It would not accord with Policies 38 and 39 of the City Plan 2019-2040 (CP), which together seek to ensure that development proposals are of a high standard of design that preserves or enhances the character and appearance of a conservation area. It would also not accord with Policy 40 of the CP, which seeks to ensure that roof extensions do not adversely impact on heritage assets and are of a design that is sympathetic to the architectural character of the existing building.

Conclusion

16. In conclusion, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR