
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 December 2022

by Gareth W Thomas BSc(Hons) MSc(Dist) DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28 December 2022

Appeal A - Ref: APP/X5990/Y/22/3293006

University Of Notre Dame, 1-4 Suffolk Street, London SW1Y 4HG

- 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 the University of Notre Dame against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 21/08017/LBC, dated 23 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 25 January 2022.
 - The works proposed are for the erection of projecting externally illuminated 'blade' sign.
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Appeal B - Ref: APP/X5990/H/22/3293009

University Of Notre Dame, 1-4 Suffolk Street, London SW1Y 4HG

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by the University of Notre Dame against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 21/08037/ADV, dated 23 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 December 2021.
 - The advertisement proposed is for the display of 1 x projecting externally illuminated 'blade' sign.
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Decision

Appeal A - Ref: APP/X5990/Y/22/3293006:

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B - APP/X5990/H/22/3293009:

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

3. The appeal concerns a Grade II listed building within the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area (TSCA). The Act imposes particular responsibilities on the decision taker. Consequently, the main issues are whether the works preserve the listed building or any features of special architectural and historic interest it possesses and whether the character or appearance of the TSCA is preserved or enhanced and whether any harm is caused to the significance of these designated heritage assets.

Preliminary matters

4. The appellant has indicated that illumination would not be an essential pre-requisite of my decision.

Reasons

5. Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 72(1) of the Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
6. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) says when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to that asset's conservation.
7. The former University Club, now part of the University of Notre Dame campus is a very substantial three storey and basement property of Portland stone under a slated mansard roof standing at the corner of Pall Mall and Suffolk Street within the Trafalgar Conservation Area (TCA). Described in the listing as an *'early instance of Blomfield's refined Beaux Arts classicism in the neo-Gabriel French manner but still with certain English neo-Mannerist features (or rather solecisms)'*, the key attributes of the special architectural interest lies in the neo-classical design of the building incorporating described in the listing as *9-window with front to Pall Mall East grouped in rhythm 1:3:1:3:1 with the recessed single window bays flanked in antis by giant Ionic quarter columns whilst the wider 3 window groups are set in recessed shallow through-storey segmental bows*. The appeal property holds considerable special architectural interest, most evidently expressed in its refined, grand and well-articulated elevation to Pall Mall East.
8. The TSCA is characterised by its mixture of nationally important urban spaces, monumental stone buildings in classical styles and, in the context of the immediate setting, converging street patterns with strong robust architecture providing cornerstones to the square. The appeal building makes a significant and positive contribution to the urban townscape at an important corner to the square.
9. The works concern the fixing of a hanging sign of modest dimensions to the front façade of this imposing neo-classical building. Described as a 'blade' sign, it would be of similar dimensions to and be positioned at the same height as an existing hanging sign at the property. The Council observes that the method of illumination of the neighbouring sign has not been authorised. Contrary to the officer report commentary, the appeal sign would be of appropriate size in relation to the massing of the front elevation. However, it would fail to respect the building's character and in combination with the existing sign would result in a cluttered appearance. Consequently, I consider that the sign would obscure and distract away from the significance and special interest of the building.
10. Advertising in the area is not a common feature. The existing sign is particularly grating in the context of both the listed building's very fine street façade and the TSCA's nationally significant buildings and street architecture.

Although I am not obliged to undertake any comparison exercise, I have duties under the Act as described above. The overriding conclusion that I have reached is that this sign would harm the significance of the listed building and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

11. I have taken account of Policies 38, 39 and 40 of the Westminster City Plan 2019 - 2040 (April 2021) as far as they are relevant to the protection of listed buildings and the character and appearance of conservation areas but quite simply the proposed advertisement whether illuminated or not would be seriously harmful to the significance of these designated heritage assets.

Conclusion

12. For the above reasons, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

Gareth W Thomas

INSPECTOR