



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2023 by R Dickson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/23/3324971

Flat 2, 31 Gloucester Street, City of Westminster, London SW1V 2DB

- 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 Harry Beeching against the decision of the City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref 23/02497/FULL, dated 14 April 2023, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as “replace the existing timber windows with upvc sash on the rear elevations”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. Whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Pimlico Conservation Area (PCA).

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal building is a mid-nineteenth century, stucco fronted terraced townhouse which has been converted into flats. It, along with others in the terrace, add an imposing classical grandness to the street scene, which is emphasised by the uniformity and architectural features of its buildings such as the fenestration rhythm, header and recess detail, doorways and porticos. Some buildings have later windows inserted and rear elevations have clearly undergone change. The quality and traditionality of the surviving elements of the building nonetheless contribute positively to the significance of the PCA.
5. Design options and technology related thereto aside; I have not been provided with specific detailing of the proposed windows in comparison to the existing/original. I cannot be sure therefore that they would represent a sympathetic replacement. In any case, UPVC is not a traditional material. It tends to be larger in profile, is more sheer and uniform in appearance and less tactile in feel than traditional materials like timber and thus is clearly discernible therefrom. Its use would not therefore sit appropriately with the period architecture of the host building and, by association, the wider group.

6. I appreciate that the material is in use elsewhere and the current windows on the rear of the building do not match. I am also mindful of the fact that the elevations affected by the proposals are not public facing. However, inappropriate additions to this and other buildings would not justify further or the same here and harm that would arise from the use of UPVC would not be reduced by it being largely obscure in the public realm. It would relate the integrity and honesty of the building's design and historic architectural form and in any case would be visible from multiple other buildings that back onto it.
7. The proposals would therefore fail to either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the PCA. This harm would, given the appeal scheme's nature and scale, be less than substantial for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework). I am required to balance such against the scheme's public benefits. The use of UPVC would improve heat retention in the property and have maintenance benefits over timber. This arguably satisfies the overall national push towards greater energy efficiency and sustainability. That said, I have not been advised of what other measures that may yield a similar result with less or no harm have been explored and why they were discounted. In any event, the net contribution such measures would bring in this case would be limited by the scale of the proposals. I remain to be convinced therefore that the harm I have found would be satisfactorily outweighed.
8. Accordingly, the proposed development would fail to comply with Policies 38, 39 and 40 of the City of Westminster City Plan 2019-2040, which collectively seek to ensure that development will positively contribute to the character and appearance of the existing area and heritage assets.

Conclusion and Recommendation

9. The appeal scheme would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations, including the Framework and worthy of sufficient weight, that would indicate a decision other than in accordance therewith. I therefore recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Dickson

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

10. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR