



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2024

by Geoff Underwood BA(Hons) PGDip(Urb Cons) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 March 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2114/Y/3329751

9 The Strand, Ryde, Isle of White PO33 1JD

- 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 Steven Young against the decision of Isle of Wight Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01212/LBC, dated 10 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 11 September 2023.
 - The works proposed are the removal of a free-standing pillar on the boundary of the property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The site is located within the Ryde Conservation Area (RCA). Although the works' effect on that particular designated heritage asset is not mentioned in the Council's reason for refusal, I am nevertheless required by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Main Issue

3. Therefore, the main issue raised by this appeal is the effect that removing the pillar would have on the special architectural or historic interest of the grade II listed building, 9 and 10 The Strand, and on the character or appearance of the RCA.

Reasons

4. 9 and 10 The Strand comprises a large and imposing pair of early Victorian semi-detached villas. It derives considerable significance as a designated heritage asset from its age, architecture, materials, architectural details and features, including those around the boundary of the building.
5. It is one of a number of substantial dwellings in the vicinity, whose qualities make an important contribution to the history and townscape of the RCA where streets of Regency and Victorian dwellings make a notable contribution to its significance.
6. As noted in the list description, Nos 9 and 10 are not divided equally, with No 9 extending over a lesser proportion of the building's frontage. There have been a series of alterations to No 10, the most conspicuous of which are the garage

set forward of No 10, the removal of the front wall between No 9 and gate piers serving No 10 exposing a hard surfaced parking area, and a partly blocked opening and inserted door in one of the central bays, with associated stairs. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding these alterations, there is significant similarity and symmetry between the two hands of The Strand façade, and the listed building largely retains a similar and balanced configuration across the front elevation.

7. This arrangement includes the situation and detailing of the two main entrance doors and steps leading up to them. This symmetrical relationship is reflected at the footway edge where each side of the building has a pair of matching piers beyond which paths lead up to the steps and doorways. This configuration plays an important part in the formal and symmetrical arrangement of the listed building.
8. This situation is not substantially undermined by the two gaps in the frontage between the gate piers and the boundary on No 9's side, and with the gap adjacent to the remaining front wall to No 9 and that next to the gate piers at No 10. Therefore, despite the alterations that have occurred to the building and its boundary with The Strand, the formal entrance arrangements including the two pairs of gate piers remain, enabling an understanding and appreciation of the symmetrical composition, and it turn part of the significance, of the listed building.
9. The removal of the left hand pier would result in the loss of historic fabric and upset the symmetry that currently exists, to the detriment of the special interest of the listed building. Furthermore, as the similarly detailed and proportioned but clearly larger pier that sits on the party boundary with property to the left would remain, this would result in an awkward relationship upsetting the current hierarchy of such features that exist, particularly as that larger pier is itself one of a pair on the adjoining property. This would erode the evidence of the delineation of the main domestic entrance route to this side of the property.
10. Although the pier shows some damage from its previous incorporation into a now demolished garage, this is limited in extent and not overly conspicuous. This has not reduced the aesthetic or evidential value of the pier, and hence the special interest of the listed building, to any extent that would justify its removal.
11. The plainer piers on either side of the central opening in the frontage to No 10 do not possess the same detailing or elegance of the two pairs outside the entrance doors on either side. Given that opening's central location, their existence does not support the appellant's view that the appeal proposal would restore any balance in the appearance of the building.
12. As the appellant points out, a number of large villa type properties on The Strand have also lost boundary walls and have hard surfaced parking areas of various sizes occupying their forecourts. However, I also noted that other properties in the street retain their enclosures and gate piers, such that large expanses of forecourt parking nor the absence of gate pier features is not ubiquitous. The character and appearance of this part of this part of the RCA has not been eroded by similar alterations to such an extent that would render the proposed works markedly less harmful to the significance of the RCA.

13. As required by the Act, I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building and any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses, and I have paid special attention to preserving the character or appearance of the RCA. In so doing, the proposed works would fail to preserve these attributes of the listed building, thereby harming its significance.
14. It follows that as the special interest of the listed building within the RCA would be materially harmed, that the character and appearance of the RCA as a whole, whose significance relies to a considerable extent on the historic buildings along with their enclosure features forming its distinctive streetscape, would also fail to be preserved and would be similarly incrementally diminished.
15. I have given great weight to the designated heritage assets' conservation. Given the extent of works, that they affect only part of the listed building in a large area of townscape which makes up the RCA, the harm to the listed building's and the RCA's significance would be less than substantial in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, less than substantial harm in this respect does not equate to the harm not carrying considerable importance and weight. The Framework requires that such harm is weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
16. I can appreciate that the appellant has spent time and effort in retaining and repairing the interior of part of the listed building. Along with reversing former insensitive alterations, this would help to ensure the continued use and preservation of part of the listed building. However, this has not been shown to be dependant on the proposed works.
17. Reference has been made to the convenience of charging electric vehicles (EVs) on the forecourt. I can appreciate that were two EVs used by the occupiers that, with the pier in situ, it may be that only one EV at a time might be practically charged within the site on The Strand side. However, whilst swapping vehicles to charge them might be an inconvenience, the retention of the pier would not prevent the use of more than one EV. There is no convincing demonstration that the listed building, which has remained providing residential accommodation, is in anything other than its optimal viable use, nor that the works are necessary to maintain that situation.
18. Given that the width of the forecourt opening would only increase by a limited amount, and piers would remain on either side, any improvements to visibility afforded to drivers of vehicles leaving the property, and in turn the safety of pedestrians and other road users, would be marginal. Whilst enabling an additional vehicle to be parked off the street it would also remove, albeit a small area, of on-street parking as well. The removal of the concrete garage base has the potential to improve the appearance of the frontage, albeit it has not been shown that its removal would be dependent on the proposed works. Therefore, considered together, any public benefits that would arise from the works would be very limited and would not outweigh the heritage harm.

19. Insofar as they are relevant, the works would be contrary to Policies DM2 and DM11 of the Core Strategy¹ which, together and amongst other criteria, seek to preserve heritage assets.
20. I only have very limited information about the external alterations carried out on the building, including when they may have been implemented and whether authorised. Irrespective of this, past inappropriate alterations can rarely be a convincing justification for undertaking further harmful works to a protected building. Those alterations do not, therefore, alter my findings.
21. For the above reasons, the works would harm the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building and the character or appearance of the RCA. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Geoff Underwood

INSPECTOR

¹ Island Plan – Isle of White Core Strategy (including Waste and Minerals) and Development Management Development Plan Document, 2012.