



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2024

by H Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/Y/24/3338875

122 Castelnau, Barnes, Richmond upon Thames, London SW13 9EU

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Taunton against the decision of London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.
 - The application Ref is 23/1667/LBC.
 - The works proposed are internal modifications to the living room and bar area at the upper ground floor of the main house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the proposal is in a conservation area and relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
3. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) was published in December 2023 after the Council made its decision. I have had regard to the revised Framework in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

5. The appeal property, 122 Castelnau (No 122), is a two-storey dwelling located on the eastern side of Castelnau. No 122 forms part of a Grade II listed building¹ built during the mid-19th century.
6. The listed building includes a group of formal semi-detached pairs of villas of similar design, two storeys high with basements and set well back from the road. Their style is restrained classical with each house framed by two full height decorative Ionic pilasters in stucco. This and the presence of similar palettes of materials, window styles, and arched doorways, is part of the heritage merit of the listed building.

¹ List Entry: 91-125 (odd) Castelnau, 84-122 (even) Castelnau – list entry number 1358080, Group value Grade II listed

7. The internal layout of the upper ground floor of No 122 consists of a main entrance hall that leads to a reception room, living room and a study with access to the kitchen and other rooms. I observed that the internal walls in the reception room, living room and study had a distinctively deep styled skirting board that circled the entire room except for where the fireplaces, doors and windows were located. The ornate cornicing between the walls and ceiling in the living room and reception room was striking, encircling both spaces and giving them a grand appearance. Although there was coving present in the study, it had a simpler and uniform design compared to the ornate cornicing present in the other two rooms, indicating a less prestigious space. While there have been some alterations internally, such as modern door openings, much of the historic layout and room use of the upper ground floor in this domestic building appears to remain largely intact.
8. These surviving historic architectural features, layouts and circulation routes all add to an understanding of the architectural hierarchy of the building and the function and uses of its internal spaces, revealing the building's evolution over time. Thus, the surviving historic fabric and the integrity of the building's plan form make a valuable contribution to the building's heritage value as a designated heritage asset.
9. I acknowledge the appellant's point about the group value of the properties which comprise the listed building. However, the external and internal features of special architectural or historic interest of the individual properties that survive undoubtedly also contribute to the listed building's value as a heritage asset.
10. From the evidence available to me, I consider that the special interest and significance of the listed building to be largely derived from its historic and architectural interests. Important contributors in these regards which are pertinent to the appeal are the building's surviving historic fabric, the legibility of its historical internal plan form, and its pleasing architectural style.

Proposal and effects

11. The proposal seeks internal modifications to the existing living room and study area at the upper ground floor level of No 122 by proposing to demolish the wall positioned between these two rear rooms. However, the proposal would remove the entire wall, including its skirting board and a substantial section of the living room's decorative historic cornicing. These works would not only result in the irreversible loss of historic fabric but would also obscure the understanding of the historic layout, room use, and access patterns. It would erode the clear distinction between the principal space of the living room from the study area, diminishing the plan form and layout of the dwelling which contributes to the building's special interest and significance.
12. The appellant intends to replicate and restore the associated cornicing following removal of the wall. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate how or where it would be fitted, or whether it would accurately reflect the existing historic cornicing. On this basis, I cannot be certain that the insertion of such a feature would not undermine the authenticity and integrity of the asset or confuse the onlooker as to the building's narrative.
13. The appellant indicates that permission has already been granted to modify the opening between the living room and the study area to create a double door

size opening (ref: 22/2523/LBC). However, this previous approval would not remove the historic cornicing and would retain sufficient wall and division to allow an understanding of the historical internal plan form. This therefore differs from the proposal before me which would remove the entire wall and a substantial section of historic cornicing and skirting boards.

14. I acknowledge that the listing description does not make specific reference to internal partitions and layouts. Nonetheless, listings are primarily for identification purposes and do not provide an exhaustive or complete description of the building's special interest.
15. The appellant's evidence suggests that the historical plans show there is no uniformity in the layout of the upper ground floor plans across the listed group of properties, and that the existing partition wall between the rear rooms was not originally present in many of the Castelnau villas. They also indicate that No 122 has a broken spine wall that runs across the centre of the house, which is not present in many of the other Castelnau villas.
16. I accept that there are differences with the internal layout of the properties and the broken spine wall and enlarged staircase appears to be unique to properties 120 and 122 Castelnau. Nevertheless, there is no compelling evidence before me to demonstrate that No 122's internal wall has no historical value or that a larger open space across the back of the property was historically present when the building was constructed. Indeed, the scope of the listing and the statutory presumption set out under section 16(2) of the Act covers the whole building, including its internal partition walls. As explained above, the proposal would result in the irreversible loss of historic fabric, including the cornicing that has architectural and historic merit. The fact that the broken spine wall is unique to No 122 makes it even more important that its internal plan form and layout is retained.
17. Drawing the above together, I find that the proposal, by reason of its loss of historic fabric and loss of understanding of historic internal floorplan, would fail to preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II listed building. In doing so it would harm the significance of this designated heritage asset.

Public Benefits and Balance

18. With reference to paragraphs 207 and 208 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent and fairly localised nature of the proposal, I find that the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset assessed above would be 'less than substantial' but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 208 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimum viable use.
19. In this case, economic benefits would be delivered through the construction phase and the general investment into the property. However, these would be moderated by the extent of the alteration.
20. The primary outcome of the proposal, namely the creation of a large room to the rear of the house to allow for open plan living, would be solely of private benefit to the occupiers of No 122 rather than a benefit to the public at large.

Even if I were to accept that the proposal would make an improvement to the borough's housing stock, I am not persuaded that the only way of securing such benefits would be via the particular works proposed. Additionally, it has not been demonstrated that the property would not be usable or viable as a dwelling or that its future would be at risk if the appeal was to fail and works as proposed were not implemented. In these respects, the identified harm to the significance of the listed building has not been clearly and convincingly justified.

21. On balance, in giving considerable importance and weight to the harm to the significance of the listed building, I find that this would not be outweighed by the limited public benefits arising from the proposal.
22. I conclude that the proposal would not preserve the listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. It would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the provisions within the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. It would also conflict with Policies LP1 and LP3 of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Local Plan (adopted 2018). These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure development is of high architectural quality that is compatible with local character, and conserves and enhances historic assets, resisting the removal or modification of features that are both internally and externally of architectural importance or that contribute to the significance of the asset.

Other Matters

23. The listed building is located within Castelnau Conservation Area (CA). Mindful of the statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Act, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance. The CA, which includes the Castelnau villas, was designated in recognition of the architectural and historic value of the continuous groups of buildings along Castelnau in a setting of fine trees. The road Castelnau forms part of the busy A306 linking the South Circular to the Great West Road via Hammersmith Bridge which is located at the northern end of the CA. The scale and massing of the buildings along Castelnau contribute towards a unique, large scale, formal townscape which makes it quite distinct.
24. The appeal listed building largely retains its overall external historic character and detailing and therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and thereby to its significance as a designated heritage asset.
25. The external appearance of the front and side elevations of No 122 would be unchanged by the proposal. Therefore, due to the internal nature of the proposed works, it would preserve the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and would not harm its significance as a designated heritage asset. I note the Council raised no concerns in this respect either.
26. The appellant indicates that where houses were built with two rooms across the rear, they were almost always later modified to remove the internal partition, suggesting that the open space across the rear was a more appropriate and more suitable layout. However, for this particular case before me, it would not be appropriate for the reasons given above.

27. My attention has also been drawn to a number of previous planning permissions² for internal modifications to listed properties located on Castelnau. However, from the limited information before me, it appears that some sections of the walls were retained, such as wall stubs, to indicate the line of the removed wall. This differs from the proposal before me, which would remove the entire wall. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its own merits based on the evidence before me.

Conclusion

28. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR

² 13/3905/LBC, 12/3597/LBC, 03/1371/LBC, 09/0261/HOT