



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 July 2025

by Paul Thompson DipTRP MAUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/Y/25/3359346

Flat 88, 3 Whitehall Court, City of Westminster, London SW1A 2EL

- 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 Sir David Adjaye against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/03958/LBC.
 - The works proposed are install new entrance doors to the combined apartment and new stone flooring to replace carpet in the newly acquired corridor to match and extend the existing stone flooring of the lobby area in Flat 88.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (England) Act 1990 (the Act). Section 16(2) of the Act requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Additionally, section 72(1) of the Act confers on the decision maker a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This duty applies to listed building appeals, which I shall address in my decision. However, an appeal against a refusal of planning permission has not been made. Therefore, my consideration of the appeal does not extend to section 66(1) of the Act.
3. Listed building appeals are not subject to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, so they do not need to be determined in accordance with the development plan. This is further confirmed by the lack of a requirement in section 16(2) of the Act to have regard to the development plan when determining applications and appeals for listed building consent. Policy 39 of the City Plan 2019-2040 (April 2021) (the City Plan) is therefore a material consideration only.
4. At the time of my visit, I observed that the corridor that would be within the flat had been the subject of alterations to include timber cladding to the walls over decorative columns. The cladding extended to around two-thirds of the height of the corridor, with uplighting above. It is unclear whether these works have been consented, but they are not referred to within the appeal application, so do not form part of the scheme before me. Accordingly, I have not had regard to them, and I have only considered the appeal scheme shown on the application drawings.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

Special Interest and Significance

6. Whitehall Court is a Grade II* listed¹ late-19th Century eight- and nine-storey mansion house, with a basement and attic rooms. It was designed by the architects Thomas Archer and Arthur Green and constitutes a fine example of the French Renaissance style. It is constructed of Portland stone, decorative iron balconies, and an ornate and distinctive roofscape inspired by the Chateaux de la Loire. Its architectural scale and visual dominance are important within its surroundings, including to how it complements the National Liberal Club adjacent, and it is a key part of the spectacular view of Whitehall from St James' Park.
7. The floor plan and internal finishing of the building are also important to its legibility and appearance, including the circulation and communal spaces set around the central internal light wells, all of which are detailed and finished to a high standard, demonstrating craftsmanship of the highest order. The flats were also originally designed to provide superior accommodation, so they were carefully designed to separate living, sleeping and service areas. However, like with Flat 88, changes in demand led to subdivision of many flats. The building also accommodates other uses, most notably a private members club with hotel facilities.
8. The interior design of Flat 88, like others, is reflective of the style of the occupants of the time. The evidence before me indicates, prior to alterations instigated by the appellant, much of the internal fabric of the flat had succumbed to alterations carried out throughout the 20th Century, including through subdivision. Hence, its interior made only a limited contribution to the special interest of the listed building. The appellant, who is an architect of some prestige and standing, has instigated considerable investment in its renovation to improve the living environment, including contemporary timber panelling, and has reinstated its original legibility by returning to one flat. Accordingly, a new chapter has been created in the history and architecture of the flat. This has contributed to the listed building's special interest, albeit to a limited extent given its overall scale and extent.
9. Until the appellant acquired it, Flat 88 did not include the corridor leading to it, so it would have had a very different appearance to the flat, sharing characteristics of the circulation spaces found throughout the building. Moreover, from what I saw elsewhere, decorative columns and other plaster and timber embellishments in the corridors leading to flats contribute significantly to the arrival experience of travel to each flat. This reinforces the original design intentions for the building to provide superior accommodation.
10. The Council has previously accepted the principle of repositioning the entrance to Flat 88 to within its corridor area to create a private lobby off the fifth-floor, as access needed to be provided to a service room for the lift. Listed building consent was granted in June 2022² for double-leaf entrance doors designed with elaborate

¹ List Entry Number: 1266894.

² Planning Reference: 22/02587/LBC.

framing and detailing to match the existing ornate timber doors from the lobby. These would have been positioned centrally between the pilasters closest to the lobby doors and scribed around the projecting detailing. The Council has also referred to other doors being approved in a similar way throughout the building, but I have not been referred to any and did not observe any at the time of my visit.

11. The consented scheme also included stone flooring from the flat into the corridor, up to the outside edge of the decorative column, to the lobby-side of the approved doors. These works have been carried out, and a temporary door with surround fitted in the same position as the proposal.
12. Despite alterations to the floor plan of Whitehall Court, as far as it is relevant to the appeal before me, I find the special interest of this listed building to be primarily associated with its architectural and historic interest as a notable mansion house of late-19th Century construction. It possesses sublime architectural detailing inside and out, that is befitting of its Grade II* status, including the internal communal and circulation spaces, along with their relationship to the flats in the building.

Effect of the Proposal

13. The proposal is for a single large solid door, of modern composition, flush fitting with its surround, with recessed windows, door handle and letter box details. Like doors already installed in the flat, it would be finished with an oak veneer, so it would be a contemporary reworking of doors found elsewhere in the building, including at the lobby.
14. Criterion G of Policy 39 of the City Plan does not require works to listed buildings to slavishly copy historic architectural detailing with new interventions, but it does require that they relate sensitively to the period and architectural detail of the building and protect original or significant detail and historic fabric. The appellant's rationale for the design approach to the proposed door is not without merit, as the corridor now forms part of the flat and the design is informed by the modern interior therein. For that reason, it is not necessary to reproduce the doors consented in 2022. However, in taking that approach it does necessarily follow that there is carte blanche for the design to disregard the context of the corridor and its important historical role.
15. The entire composition would be situated at the outside edge of the decorative columns, on the lobby side. The cornices, dados and skirtings would all be retained but scribed with the door surround. In views from the lobby, while the cornices would be visible to either side and the downstand beam would be visible above, the other detailing would be concealed. From within the flat, all detailing to the opposite side would be visible. It therefore follows that the position of the proposed door and its surround would harmfully disrupt the legibility of the corridor by concealing the detailing of the first decorative columns in the corridor seen in views from the lobby.
16. While the appeal scheme and 2022 consent both subdivide the corridor, in the latter the doors are positioned to enable their architecture to be considered alongside the columns. The appeal scheme therefore fails where the consented scheme does not, in that it does not enable the new chapter in the evolution of the corridor to be appreciated alongside evidence of its historic function, when viewed from the lobby. Notwithstanding any technical complexities that may arise from the affixment of the door surround to the decorative features within the corridor, they

would, nevertheless, be concealed. This would considerably weaken the legibility and understanding of the corridor and its decorative features to the special interest of the listed building.

Public Benefits, Heritage Balance, and Conclusions on the Main Issue

17. The introduction of the proposed door would be a discordant alteration to the listed building, notably in the context of the legibility and understanding of the decorative columns and other features in the corridor leading to Flat 88. This would therefore fail to preserve the listed building or its features of special architectural or historic interest and, thereby, its understanding and significance as a heritage asset. This harm would be localised and limited, given that the site forms a small component part of the listed building, in one of its many corridors. Hence, this would amount to a low level of less than substantial harm to its significance.
18. It is not essential for policies of the development plan to repeat the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), but the supporting text to Policy 39 of the City Plan refers to the substantial and less than substantial harm implicit within the Framework. Moreover, Paragraph 215 identifies that the latter should be weighed against the public benefits of proposals.
19. The proposal would be a further display of the appellant's work as a renowned architect, but the harm that would result from these works means this would only amount to a heritage benefit of limited weight.
20. The appellant has referred to the benefit of unifying Flats 88 and 88A to form one residence and the removal of subdivisions including separate entrance doors. These works have enhanced the legibility of the floorplan of the flat and removed visual harms to the internal architecture of the building. They will also have required the deployment of considerable funding and resources by the appellant. Nevertheless, the works were previously consented by the Council in 2015³ and have been undertaken by the appellant. Accordingly, these benefits could not be considered for the proposal.
21. The Council did not raise any concerns in relation to the aspect of the appeal scheme to replace carpeting in the corridor with stone flooring. I note it matches the stone used in the flat, so I also have no objection to its use. However, as this was also consented in 2022 and has been introduced, there would be no practical purpose to the consideration of whether this would warrant a split decision for the appeal, should the need arise.
22. The consented schemes from 2015 and 2022 also both include means to provide an acceptable level of privacy and screen drafts into the flat, with new entrance doors respectively across the corridor where it meets the flat and between the columns slightly back of the current location. While I accept the appeal scheme is an alternative for the latter, given that a consented solution exists that would enclose the private element of the corridor, at best this would only be afforded limited weight as a benefit associated with the effective use of the flat.
23. The appeal site is also situated within the Whitehall Conservation Area. The works to the building are internal so would preserve its character and appearance, but

³ Planning Reference: 14/12747/LBC

the absence of harm in this regard neither weighs in favour nor against the scheme.

24. Paragraph 212 of the Framework states, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).
25. Taking the stated benefits of the appeal scheme together, while the proposal would result in a low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building, I am not persuaded there would be public benefits of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the great weight to the asset's conservation and the considerable importance and weight to this harm. Within the context of my duty under the Act, I conclude that the identified aspects of the proposal would fail to preserve the listed building and features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Hence, it would conflict with the stated heritage aims of Policy 39 of the City Plan.

Conclusion

26. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Thompson

INSPECTOR