



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2025

by A Hunter LLB (Hons) PG Dip MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/25/3369538

20 Clifton Road, City of Westminster, London W9 1ST

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Gail's Ltd against the decision of the City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00682/FULL.
 - The development proposed is the removal of existing shopfront window, and replacement with a new glazed openable shopfront (retrospective works).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the removal of existing shopfront window, and replacement with a new glazed openable shopfront at 20 Clifton Road, City of Westminster, London W9 1ST in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00682/FULL, and the plans submitted with it, namely drawing no's 1729 AD-1007 (location plan); 1729 - AD-1010 Rev. 5 (proposed ground floor plan); and 1729 - AD-3001 Rev. 4 (proposed elevation).

Preliminary Matters

2. In my decision above I have omitted reference to the proposal being retrospective, as this is not an act of development.
3. I saw on my site inspection that the new openable shopfront has already been installed, the appeal has been determined on this basis.
4. The Council has advised that its draft City Plan Partial Review (CPPR) is currently being examined, which it says attracts limited weight at this stage. I have not been made aware of any policies of the CPPR that are relevant to the appeal proposal. Consequently, I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the host property, the terrace it is part of, and the Maida Vale Conservation Area (the CA); and
 - the non-designated heritage asset, known as 20 Clifton Road (NDHA).

Reasons

6. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires when determining proposals in conservation areas that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or

appearance of that area. At paragraph 210, the Framework sets out matters which should be considered, including sustaining, and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Paragraph 212 of the Framework states that, 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.

7. The CA contains a variety of buildings, uses, and architectural styles, including many rows of well-design terraced properties often in tree lined roads. The appeal property is a 4-storey, end terraced property occupying a corner location facing onto Clifton Road, with its side elevation facing Lanark Road. It is said to be an attractive nineteenth century, stucco finished, classical designed building, with a decorative bombe balcony at first floor level accessed by French windows with timber sashes on the upper storeys, and part of a terrace of properties that have a similar appearance. These aspects positively contribute to the significance of the CA.
8. The ground floor of the appeal property has a Class E use, and it is understood to be currently used as a baker's shop and café, with residential units above. It sits alongside a parade of shops and commercial uses on the ground floor of properties along both sides of this part of Clifton Road. There is considerable variety in the shopfronts nearby, including aluminium framed shopfronts; traditional timber shopfronts, and shopfronts with large areas of glazing, and most have doors, mainly glazed on their frontages, with some also having awnings. The submitted plans show that prior to the new shop front, there was a timber framed display window with a central horizontal glazing bar and two vertical glazing bars, the planning history indicates that it was installed following permission being granted in 2006 and it was not the original shop front, although it is said to be representative of a traditional display window.
9. Westminster's Shopfronts, Blinds and Signs - A Guide to their Design, dated May 1993 (SBS), provides guidance for the alteration, replacement and restoration of shopfronts and says the special character of a shopping street is created either through a uniformity in design and architectural style, or by a variety of styles that can sometimes provide richness and vitality. It states that unsympathetically designed modern shopfronts can be a problem, particularly in conservation areas, and it provides a typical example of a 19th century shopfront, which has a central window like that which pre-existed at the appeal property. Although the SBS also recognises that modern contemporary shopfronts can be appropriate and that they can be integrated into traditional facades.
10. The appeal property without a door opening within the pre-existing shopfront was somewhat of an anomaly compared to nearby shopfronts. In addition, it is also different to most of them with its dual aspect. I saw on my site inspection that there was a large awning that extended over the new openable shopfront and there were iron railings and a seating area located in front of it. These existing features meant the new vertical glazing bars were not particularly prominent when viewed from the adjoining pavement. Nor were the horizontal stripes across the glazing easily discernible from the pavement and beyond, and I did not find their modest presence to create unacceptable visual clutter. The appearance of the glazing, even when opened (which I observed during my site inspection), and not equally

spaced, was not harmful to the appearance of the building, moreover its variety added to the vitality, variety and quality of the parade of shopfronts in the area.

11. Furthermore, neither the pre-existing shopfront or the new openable shopfront correspond to the size and design of the openings above it, which are seen differently to those on the ground floor. The design of the new openable shopfront gives the property a more active frontage onto Clifton Road, but in a subtle manner behind the awning and railings, which does not harm the significance of the host building, particularly the appearance of its upper floors. As a result, the new openable shopfront integrates well into the building's façade, assisted by its high-quality modern design, and slender aluminium framing finished in a cream colour. Moreover, the new openable shopfront allows the building to appropriately adapt to how the ground floor unit and outdoor decking is currently used.
12. In addition, given the lack of any uniformity in shopfront designs along this parade of commercial units and shops, the proposed shopfront is not inconsistent with the character and appearance of this part of the CA, and for the same reason I am not persuaded that the loss of the pre-existing shopfront is harmful to the CA. Furthermore, and recognising that the new shopfront is not of a traditional design found in the CA, it nonetheless has a simple design, with vertical emphasis and respects the proportions of the host building, the terrace it is part of, and the CA. In view of the varying shop fronts around, its simple appearance and functional use behind other structures, I find its effect upon the CA to be neutral in this case, it would also preserve the character and appearance of the CA, consistent with the duty in the Act
13. The Council has provided a photograph of what they consider to be a traditional shop front on a property in Soho, which has a traditional 6 pane display window design and incorporates a door. Be that as it may, in view of the surrounding built context to the appeal site and my findings above, it has not led me to conclude differently regarding the acceptability of the new shopfront.
14. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an acceptable effect upon the character and appearance of the host property, the terrace it is part of, and preserve the character and appearance of the CA, and comply with the relevant parts of Policies 38, 39 and 40 of the City of Westminster, City Plan 2019 – 2040, adopted April 2021 (CP), which amongst other things require development to positively contribute to Westminster's townscape and streetscape, through materials, scale and access, and ensure heritage assets are conserved and enhanced, allowing sensitive adaptation to meet changing needs in a manner appropriate to their significance. Although the new shopfront is not a traditional design referred to in the SBS, it would comply with its main objectives of ensuring sympathetic development that does not harm the character and appearance of the area, and allow a contemporary modern design, that contributes to the vitality and variety of styles in the area.

NDHA

15. The Council also regard the appeal property, as described above, to be an unlisted building of merit and a NDHA, because of its architectural quality and contribution to the area, and I see no reason to disagree. Paragraph 216 of the Framework says the effect of development on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset

should be taken into account, and a balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

16. In view of my findings above, the proposed new openable shop front would introduce a sympathetic alteration to the ground floor of the NDHA, which would allow a sensitive adaptation of the property to facilitate improved access, respecting the vertical glazing lines of the previous shopfront, and use complementary materials. Moreover, it would ensure the main significance of the building, on its upper floors would be retained and it would not be harmful to its terrace setting.
17. I therefore conclude that the new shopfront would not be harmful to the significance of the NDHA, and it would comply with the relevant parts of CP Policies 38, and 39, insofar as they require development to conserve the significance of heritage assets, including unlisted buildings.

Conditions

18. Given that the development has already been undertaken, a condition requiring it to be undertaken with the proposed plans is not necessary. I have carefully considered the Council's requested condition in regard to limiting the hours of operation of the openable sliding doors on the new shop front to between 9am and 5pm. The appellant has also suggested a condition to reflect current opening hours (06:45-18:30 Monday to Friday, 07:00-18:30 Saturday and 07:30-18:00 Sunday). The submitted Noise Acoustic Technical Note, dated March 2025, prepared by RBA Acoustics (NATN), undertook noise readings with the new shop front open and closed on the early part of a Tuesday afternoon in February 2025. It found a 1 dB difference in terms of the background noise levels measured 2 metres from the façade of an upper residential unit, which was regarded as a slight impact, and the additional noise was said not to be perceptible for neighbouring occupiers. It is also unclear what, if any, hours of use restrictions there are on the existing outdoor seating area and baker's shop and café. In view of this, the conclusions of the NATN, and the appeal site's location within the Clifton Road Town Centre, I am not persuaded that conditions regarding when it could be opened would be reasonable and necessary and meet the relevant tests as set out in paragraph 57 of the Framework.

Conclusion

19. The proposed development accords with the development plan when taken as a whole and there are no other material considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

A Hunter

INSPECTOR