



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2026

by N Armstrong BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/X5990/W/25/3374998

42-44 George Street, City of Westminster, London W1U 7ES

- 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 Shai Greenberg against the decision of City of Westminster Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/04991/FULL.
 - The development proposed is modifications to the front ground floor windows and main entrance door, including the installation of an external access ramp.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's decision notice and delegated report refer to the Harley Street Conservation Area. The Council have since clarified that reference is an error, and the appeal site is in fact located within the Portman Estate Conservation Area. I have determined the appeal accordingly having regard to the correct designation.
3. The appeal proposal includes development that is not part of the Council's reason for refusal, nor does the Council identify any conflict with the development plan in relation to these aspects of the application. Following my site visit I have no reason to disagree. Therefore, the focus of this appeal is the proposed alterations to the windows and main entrance door referred to in the Council's decision notice.
4. The City of Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 (2026) (the CP) has been subject to Partial Review, and this was recently adopted in January 2026 during the appeal. The previous policies referred to within the Council's reason for refusal have been replaced by Policies 42, 44 and 45 of the CP. Both parties have had the opportunity to comment on this matter, and I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the existing building, and whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Portman Estate Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

6. The appeal site is a ground-floor commercial unit operating as a hair salon within a prominent terrace of townhouses in the CA. The terrace between Nos 36–56 George Street forms an attractive group with consistent upper-floor appearance, while the ground floors vary, featuring door and window openings or shopfronts reflecting a more traditional design, predominantly constructed in timber. The properties on the northern side of George Street between Baker Street and

Manchester Street are historically and architecturally distinct from the modern development to the south side, which lies outside the CA. Overall, this part of George Street is characterised by commercial uses at street level.

7. The CA as a whole features a mix of residential and commercial development. The Portman Estate Conservation Area Audit (2003) (the CAA) highlights its prevailing character is derived from the harmonious rhythm generated by coherent blocks of historic terraced buildings. These terraces have consistent characteristics of scale, plot sub-division, elevational treatment, solid and void patterns and use of materials in a hierarchical relationship to the carefully planned, historic grid of streets and squares. However, subtle variations including later alterations, exist which add richness to some groups of properties within the uniform order of terraces. The significance of the CA is therefore derived from the architectural and historic interest of the streets and buildings within it.
8. George Street is identified in the CAA as a 'secondary route', and such streets are characterised by smaller scale activities and generally retain attractive shopfronts, many with original detailing. It goes on to state that shopfronts, including non-original ones of an appropriate design, can be of great importance in contributing to the character and appearance of both individual buildings and the conservation area and can be of historic and architectural interest in their own right. Modern shopfronts of a traditional design can contribute significantly to the character of area as on the north side of George Street where the shopfronts are attractive replicas or refurbished originals.
9. The evidence shows the current arrangement is not the appeal property's original frontage, and that No 42 previously comprised a more modern arrangement with larger glazing to its door and shop front. However, due to the proportions and appearance of the timber panelled door and window frames, alongside features such as the projecting canopy, window architraves and cills, the property currently comprises an appropriately designed frontage. This includes the use of timber and curved detailing to the window frames, which is a common feature in varying forms to the ground floor of the majority of the properties in the terraced group.
10. The panelled door is characteristic of other properties within the terraced group that do not have frontages reflecting more traditional shopfront designs, albeit there are differences in their surrounds and projecting canopies. Noting the architraves, projecting cills, brackets and depth of window reveal, the doors and windows of the appeal property provide some consistency and uniformity of design with other buildings in the group. The above features contrast with the modern design, materials and larger expanses of glazing to the southern side of George Street outside of the CA. Consequently, the appeal property positively contributes to the significance of the CA, being situated within this part of George Street, and due to the terraced group's collective overall rhythm, scale, and composition, despite variations in frontages and alterations over time.
11. The development proposes the replacement of the main timber panelled entrance door with a glazed automatic door. In addition, the existing windows would be replaced with a larger undivided window design. The development would not result in the loss of an original door or shopfront, nor a shopfront that replicates a traditional design. The larger window openings are also distinct from other commercial premises in the terraced group. However, it would introduce a much more modern door and window design in comparison to the existing openings and

other designs within the group. The development also removes the curved detailing to the window that is characteristic of the ground floor openings in the terrace and includes a change in material from timber to aluminium frames in a bronze colour. Despite the slim-profile frames and retention of other architectural features, the proposal would introduce a design and material that is not characteristic of the predominant use of timber windows and doors at this part of George Street.

12. The existing timber frames of the windows are partly recessed to the sides within their reveals, whilst the larger central sections project out with a bay design. Given the clear detailing of the timber frames, I do not find the existing windows to appear as a continuous uninterrupted expanse of glazing or a single pane of glass. However, they include sections of glazing that, even alongside the railings and landscaping to the front, allow for intervisibility into the premises and street presence. Despite the retention of their surrounding detailing, the larger expanse of glazing to the windows and door would appear as a discordant addition to the appeal property and within the terrace.
13. I have had regard to the Council's submitted Shopfronts, Blinds and Signs – A Guide to their Design (the design guide). Whilst I do not recognise some of the appellant's references to this, amongst other things, this states that shopfronts of modern design can be successfully incorporated into traditional facades if respect is paid to the architectural form of the building and to its surroundings. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the common features which occur in adjacent shops or throughout the street, whilst materials used should also be compatible with the street's character. For the reasons set out above, I do not find that the development satisfies these objectives or the overall principles of the design guide.
14. The CAA does not identify the appeal property as an unlisted building of merit or a non-designated heritage asset. However, the CAA acknowledges that most buildings contribute to the CA in a positive manner and should be retained. I agree that the building contributes to the CA and I have considered the appeal scheme on this basis. The development would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the appeal site, and the contribution it makes to the significance of the CA would be diminished. The development would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, and it would harm its significance.
15. As the change is localised in terms of the CA as a whole, the harm to the significance of the CA is less than substantial, and this harm is at the lower end of the scale in that respect. Regardless of the level of harm, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at paragraph 212 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. Paragraph 215 of the Framework requires the less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
16. The appellant's suggested public benefits include improved accessibility, reinstatement of cill brackets and greater intervisibility between the street and premises. These benefits would contribute to economic, social and environmental objectives set out in the Framework, including by improving access for all users of the business premises.
17. Even so, I am not persuaded that the new ramp and handrails are an integral part of the design of the door itself, or that these elements and the modest

enhancement of the cill brackets, could not be carried out independently, or a new door design achieved in a less harmful manner than currently proposed. There is also good intervisibility between the street and premises, and there is little before me to indicate there are issues of decline at the appeal site or in the area through vacancy or underuse. Furthermore, it has not been adequately demonstrated that this proposal is the only way to achieve the appellant's overall objectives. Therefore, these factors would not be sufficient to outweigh the great weight that I must give to the conservation of the CA and the considerable importance and weight to the less than substantial harm that I have identified to its significance.

18. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the existing building and it would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. It therefore conflicts with Policies 42, 44 and 45 of the CP. Amongst other things, these aim for new development to positively contribute to the townscape and streetscape, ensure heritage assets are conserved and enhanced, and preserve or enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas.

Other Matters

19. As set out above, the purpose of the proposal includes providing improved accessibility to the premises for all users. I have therefore had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which requires me to consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Protected characteristics in this instance include age and disability.
20. The proposed development would allow users to access the site more easily. However, this must be balanced against the great weight to be attributed to the conservation of designated heritage assets that would be in the wider public interest. From the information before me, it has not been adequately demonstrated that improved access provision could not be delivered in a less harmful way. Consequently, it is proportionate for me to dismiss the appeal.
21. I note the appellant's references to errors in the officer report. As established above I have had regard to the effects of the proposal within the CA. I have made my own assessment based upon the appeal submissions before me and my site visit.
22. The evidence references several listed buildings within the wider area, although it is common ground between the parties that the appeal site and the proposal would not affect the setting of any listed buildings. In this case, I am satisfied that the setting of nearby listed buildings would be preserved.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

N Armstrong

INSPECTOR