



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2011

by Bern Hellier BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 24 November 2011

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/A/11/2158148
72 Huntley Street, London, WC1E 6DD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by University College London against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2010/6493/P, dated 30 November 2010, was refused by notice dated 8 February 2011.
 - The development proposed is the erection of rear extension with roof light and metal balustrade to existing flat roof at sixth floor level to the UCL Cancer Institute (Class B1) building for the use as a bioinformatics centre.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of rear extension with roof light and metal balustrade to existing flat roof at sixth floor level to the UCL Cancer Institute (Class B1) building for the use as a bioinformatics centre at 72 Huntley Street, London, WC1E 6DD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 2010/6493/P, dated 30 November 2010, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: BIO/SMA/AL/06/1106, BIO/SMA/AL/07/1106, BIO/SMA/AL/2008, BIO/SMA/AL/2008 (Rev A), BIO/SMA/AL/3001, BIO/SMA/AL/3002 and BIO/SMA/SP/EX/1000.

Main issue

2. I consider there are three main issues. Firstly, whether the proposed extension would harm the character or appearance of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. Secondly, if it would, then whether there are other considerations which would support the proposal. Thirdly, whether these other considerations would outweigh harm to the Conservation Area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The Cancer Institute is a modern building of considerable architectural merit fronting onto Huntley Street. To the rear a stairwell tower and an attached six storey glazed office block close off the north end of Chenies Mews. These

elements of the building are visible from some distance away in Ridgmount Gardens which is an extension of Chenies Mews although from here they are seen against the higher University College London Hospital building in the background. The visual impact increases on entering Chenies Mews where, from about half way down the Cancer Institute building dominates the skyline.

4. At present there is a drop of a storey and a half from the stairwell tower to the office block. It may be, as the appellant suggests, that this is by accident rather than design. Nonetheless it is a positive feature which acknowledges the lower height of the mews terrace on the eastern side of the street. The properties on the terrace are plain but well proportioned, rising up to a row of four storey warehouses. From them there is then a further step up to the appeal building. The office block is set back slightly from the tower giving a strong vertical divide to the elevation at this point which is reinforced by the step between the two elements. This divide relates well to the building line in on the western side of Chenies Mews.
5. It is proposed to add an additional floor to the office block so that its flat roof would be just below that of the tower and the strong step in the roofline would be lost. The merging of the additional storey with the top of the tower would make the vertical break in the building less distinctive. The resulting increase in the massing and height of the building would adversely affect its relationship with the more intimate scale of the mews development. As such the development would not respect its local context or preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would be contrary to the provisions of local development framework¹ Policies CS14 and DP25.
6. However the material impact of the proposed development would be restricted to the street scene within Chenies Mews. The buildings fronting the mews are of no particular merit and do not individually² make a positive contribution to views to the north towards the appeal site. It is also agreed that the new storey would match the existing office block in its materials and detailing. Overall I consider the proposal would cause limited harm to the Conservation Area.

Other considerations

7. The Institute is a vibrant organisation undertaking research of importance to the well being of the community at large. It employs the full time equivalent of more than 300 staff who fully occupy the existing building. The establishment of a bioinformatics capability is necessary to enable the Institute to function effectively at the leading edge of international research and to maintain competitiveness. It needs to be located within the Institute to allow access to, and interaction with, the research teams.
8. Local development framework Policy CS16 supports the concentration of centres of medical excellence in Bloomsbury and recognises their contribution to health-related research, clinical expertise, employment and training provision. On the evidence before me I am satisfied that the bioinformatics centre would play an essential role in fostering the medical research function of the Institute and that it needs to be in this location. This would bring

¹ Consisting of the Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025 and Camden Development Policies 2010-2025.

² Bloomsbury Conservation Area appraisal and management strategy. April 2011. Bedford Square/Gower Street Sub-area para 5.74 and Map 5

significant economic benefit to the city as well as, potentially, considerable social benefit.

Balancing exercise

9. I have found that there would be limited harm arising from the visual impact on the Conservation Area. National guidance on development proposals affecting heritage assets¹ is that where a proposal has a harmful impact on the significance of a designated asset that is less than substantial harm then the public benefit of the proposal should be weighed against the harm. In the case before me, notwithstanding the conflict with local development framework Policies CS14 and DP25, I consider the substantial economic and social benefits associated with the development of the bioinformatics centre would outweigh the limited harm to the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

10. The Council has not suggested any conditions and I agree that none would be needed apart from standard conditions relating to commencement and to compliance with approved plans.
11. Subject to these conditions and for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Bern Hellier

INSPECTOR

¹ Planning Policy Statement 5 : Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) Policy HE9.4