



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2017

by Mrs Zoë Hill BA(Hons) Dip Bldg Cons(RICS) MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 20 October 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/Y/3179666

53-54 Carey Street, London, WC2A 2JB

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Nathan Silver against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref: 2017/1658/L, dated 3 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 June 2017.
 - The works proposed are described as follows: This public house, The Seven Stars, dates from 1602. The existing staircase between ground and first floors, of deal covered with plastic sheeting, is rickety and unsafe due to broken stringers. It is about 50 years old. We propose to remove the existing stringers, treads and risers and replace them with a new staircase in the same position made entirely of wrought oak with a wax finish. It will be strong and safe, and in appearance resemble the original staircase of the Elizabethan period.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed works on the special architectural and historic interest of 53-54 Carey Street, a Grade II listed building.

Reasons

3. The appeal building 'The Seven Stars' public house, is a historic building which it is suggested dates from the C17th. It has clearly seen numerous alterations and additions. Based around a timber framed structure it is brick clad and painted. It has a C19th public house frontage with two double door entrances. At first floor there are four windows, one in a jettied bay. The brickwork rises to a parapet which conceals the roof. Inside the public house is fitted with C19th bar fixtures. The building is of two main storeys, with an attic (noted in the list description) and cellar. Stairs to the first floor and cellar are located behind the bar.
4. The public house is a modest building which sits alongside much larger and taller buildings and has a clear functional use. The very great age of the building is a key aspect of its significance both aesthetically and in terms of its history. In addition its historic interior is of aesthetic and historic interest and is also likely to have additional communal value.

5. Contrary to the description of works, the appellant now accepts that the staircase is older than the 50 years originally suggested. The evidence indicates that the staircase is a structure which includes elements of great age, albeit patched and repaired over what is likely to be hundreds of years rather than decades.
6. The historic staircase, rising from a stone base pad, is of interest because of its longevity and relationship to the building structure. Whilst the staircase has clearly seen unfortunate works, largely related to the insertion of later pipework, and has seen remedial works to level up steps, this does not justify the removal of the whole of the historic fabric. Indeed some of the earlier repair work is itself of some age.
7. Turning to the matter of safety, the appellant considers that the stairs are dangerous because of their uneven surface, lack of a regular tread depth and their irregular step height, with particular concerns at the ground and first floor landing areas when the stair turns the corner. Although I found the stair to have irregular steps, given the irregular walls, narrowness and handrail, it seems to me that anyone using them would soon be aware of the situation and so would be cautious. Further, I do not consider that inserting a modern staircase would necessarily resolve the safety concerns raised. Moreover, it may be that, following the same approach as has already taken place, a scheme could be devised that provides a more manageable stair without needing the removal of the historic fabric.
8. This historic staircase is an important part of the fabric of the building and contributes to its significance. In this case I have no doubt that its removal and the insertion of a wholly new, albeit custom built, staircase would harm the significance of the listed building. I am mindful that the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that where less than substantial harm would arise to a heritage asset, which is the case here, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Whilst some public benefit might arise from making the stairs easier to negotiate and improving first floor access to the toilets in this public house, this is not sufficient to outweigh the harm identified, particularly given that there are likely to be alternative ways in which some improvement could be made.
9. I find that the proposed works would harm the listed building, the Seven Stars. As such, the works would conflict with Policy CS14 of the London Borough of Camden Local Development Framework (LBCLDF) Core Strategy (2010) and Policy DP25 of the LBCLDF Development Policies (2010), which, taken together, explain that the Council will preserve and enhance Camden's heritage assets including listed buildings and, in respect of listed buildings, will only grant consent for alterations where it considers this would not cause harm to the special interest of the building. The proposal would also conflict with Policy D2 of the emerging Camden Local Plan Submission Draft (2016) which explains that the Council will preserve, and where appropriate, enhance Camden's rich and diverse heritage and that the Council will resist alterations to a listed building where this would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the building, as would be the case here.

10. For the reasons set out above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

Zoë Hill

Inspector