



Mr Adam Hussain
Tower Hamlets Council
Town Hall
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Direct Dial: 020 7973 3091

Our ref: P01571382

7 February 2024

Dear Mr Hussain

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**193A-193B, & 195 - 195A WHITECHAPEL ROAD, LONDON, E1 1DN AND 1 TO 11
VALLANCE ROAD E1 5HS
Application No. PA/23/02117**

Thank you for your letter of 18 January 2024 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Summary

The historic buildings proposed for demolition make an important contribution to the Whitechapel Market Conservation Area. Their loss would cause harm to it, which would not be justified because the application is supported by insufficient information. Historic England objects to the grant of planning permission because the application does not comply with national planning policy.

Historic England Advice

Significance of the heritage assets

The site is located in the Whitechapel Market Conservation Area, which is characterised by fine grain historic buildings that are between two and four storeys tall, with a variety of architectural design approaches reflecting their different ages. The character of the area is analysed in detail in the Whitechapel Market Conservation Area Appraisal (2021).

Nos.3-11 Vallance Road comprises of a terrace of shophouses that were built shortly after the Pavillion Theatre redevelopment behind the site in 1874. The incised ornament of their rendered frontages is distinctive and probably designed by the theatre architect J.T. Robinson. The *Buildings of England* (London 5. East, 2005)



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notes their 'unusually eclectic stucco and scraffito decoration'. The front facades are clearly of local architectural and historic interest and should contribute to Whitechapel's rich sense of place, but are now scaffolded.

193-195 Whitechapel Road are also of some interest, whilst suffering from neglect and poor-quality signage, still make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, albeit of a lesser degree.

Impact of the proposals

The proposals are for the demolition of all of the buildings on the site, resulting in the total loss of their significance as non-designated heritage assets. The loss of the positive contribution these historic buildings make to the conservation area would result harm to it as a designated heritage asset. The facades would be dismantled, and the materials stored for reuse in a future redevelopment of the site. This application does not provide for the redevelopment of the site, however.

Relevant policy and guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation (196). Conservation is defined as process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance. Significance should be taken into account in order to avoid or minimise any conflict between conservation and any aspect of the proposal (201).

It further states that where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision (202).

Great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets (205) and any harm to significance should require clear and convincing justification (206).

Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weight against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (208).

Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred (210).

The Whitechapel Market Conservation Area appraisal and management plan (2021) states: 'The buildings at nos. 5-9 Vallance Road are currently empty (at the time of





writing in September 2021) - the front elevation and roof are scaffolded as the building is considered to be a dangerous structure. The buildings form a group with no. 11 Vallance Road. They are a set of fine grain historic buildings with decorative window surrounds, built at shophouses between 1873-6, and are typical of the area. A sensitive refurbishment of the buildings with a façade retention scheme is encouraged. Any development should demonstrate it adequately preserves or enhances the conservation area.'

Historic England's position

We note the poor condition of the buildings, which has been known to the owners for over a decade. Despite the issue of neglect having been raised by us in 2013, regrettably no action has been taken.

The applicant has indicated that the buildings may be at risk of collapse and present a significant health and safety issue. This would appear to be a matter for your Building Control team.

These buildings did (prior to scaffolding) and should make an important contribution to the Whitechapel Market Conservation Area. Their loss would result in clear harm to the conservation area, which would be exacerbated by the lack of any proposals for a replacement building.

The suggestion that such harm would be mitigated by the reconstruction of the historic facades in a future redevelopment of the site is not something that we can consider without meaningful proposals. As paragraph 210 of the NPPF requires, such loss should not be permitted without taking all reasonable steps to ensure that a development will proceed after demolition.

A façade retention scheme, as your Council's conservation area management plan encourages, has been discounted because of the costs involved in repairing the fabric prior to demolition behind. Whilst this may not be the most profitable solution, this approach would better conserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and would remove the risk of there being no reconstruction. Further information is required in order to demonstrate that it would not be feasible.

There are also no details of the feasibility of a faithful reconstruction or how this would be achieved. As no details of the redevelopment of the site have been provided, there is no guarantee that a sympathetic façade recreation scheme would be implemented.

We therefore do not consider that the proposals would comply with national planning policy. There is not sufficient information to demonstrate that the historic environment will be adequately safeguarded by these proposals and the harm has not been justified. We would be happy to consider further information which demonstrates how





significance would be conserved.

Recommendation

In line with the requirements of national planning policy, Historic England objects to the grant of planning permission. We encourage you to develop a long-term sustainable solution for this site which will protect the significance of the conservation area. We would welcome the opportunity to comment on any redevelopment proposals at the pre-application stage.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

This response relates to designated heritage assets only. If the proposals meet the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service's published consultation criteria we recommend that you seek their view as specialist archaeological adviser to the local planning authority.

The full GLAAS consultation criteria are on our webpage at the following link:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/greater-london-archaeology-advisory-service/our-advice/>

Yours sincerely

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