

49 Whitehall – Heritage Statement – October 2021

Introduction

- 1 These proposals follow on from a wider scheme, including a rear extension and new rooftop plant enclosure, granted planning consent in August 2018 (ref 18/03927/FULL). Subsequently permission was granted in November 2019 for a rear extension to the southern part of the roof to No. 49 and to the roof of the neighbouring paired building. These applications provided a full historical analysis of the buildings and wider context. This report summarises those elements pertinent to this application.

Heritage Significance

Trafalgar Square & the northern end of Whitehall

- 2 The site lies just within the southern boundary of the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area close to its border with the adjoining Whitehall Conservation Area.
- 3 Trafalgar Square was built on the line of communications between the Mall, Pall Mall East, St Martin's Place, the Strand and Whitehall. Once the communication link between Pall Mall and Portland Place had been completed in the 1820's, Nash was instructed to design plans for Trafalgar Square on the site where the King's Mews had been. The original idea had been to leave open the whole area of what is now Trafalgar Square, except for a rectangular block in the centre which was set aside for the Royal Academy.
- 4 By the end of the 19th century, the last of the remaining river palaces was Northumberland House (1605). Following a fire in 1868 it, and a number of other buildings were sold and a new broad avenue in the mould of the new boulevards constructed in Paris in the 1850s and 1860s was constructed. Northumberland Avenue was completed in 1876 with the buildings along its length erected during the 1880s.
- 5 The Admiralty Arch was constructed from 1906-11 to a design by Sir Aston Webb. Incorporating office accommodation to each side and the official residence of the First Sea Lord, it forms a formal entrance to the royal processional route down the Mall and cleverly disguises the change in axis from the Mall to the Square.
- 6 The National Gallery was intended to be a crowning visual focus to the Square. Very few of the other original buildings to the Square survive; on the south side, they were replaced in later Victorian and Edwardian times. The most important institutional buildings face the Square itself which is virtually entirely surrounded by stone faced facades with ornate decorations.
- 7 Similarly grand Regency and Victorian buildings line the main thoroughfares of the Strand, Northumberland Avenue, the top of Whitehall and St Martin's Place.

8 Behind what is now 45-51 Whitehall lies the remnants of Scotland Yard. Buildings along Great Scotland Yard itself were developed in the 18th century. The 19th century saw the occupation of buildings along Great Scotland Yard by the Office of Works. From 1829 the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police was at No.4 Whitehall Place, with a rear entrance through Great Scotland Yard.

45-51 Whitehall

9 Originally 45-51 Whitehall comprised two buildings dating from different periods and of different styles.

10 For the purposes of this report the 'Georgian' building to the north is referred to as No.49 and the Victorian building to the south as No.51.

11 No.49 Whitehall originates from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century and was built as two townhouses. However, serious structural instability meant that the building was re-built in its entirety in c.1980. A requirement of the rebuilding was that the front elevation was re-built in facsimile. The rear elevation is also of modern construction dating from the same time.

12 As part of the re-building a mansard roof was added to the top, providing an additional floor of accommodation.

13 No.51 Whitehall forms a pair with No.53 Whitehall. It is built in the Italianate style fashionable during the mid-late 19th centuries with a brick elevation and stucco'd detailing and is typical of many of the Victorian commercial buildings found around central London.

14 It too suffered from structural issues leading from subsidence and it was also re-built, but behind its façade.

15 As a consequence of their rebuilding, neither properties retain any features of historic interest inside. Their use is retail/restaurant at ground floor and offices above. The accommodation is now tired, outdated and in need of refurbishment.

16 The architectural interest of 45-51 Whitehall now lies solely in their front elevations, and in the case of No.49 this is an entire facsimile. The current mansard floor to No.49 Whitehall is poor quality and other than very broad form is not historically detailed and obviously from the late 20th century.

17 Adjacent and nearby to Nos 45-51 Whitehall are a number of listed buildings, including Whitehall House (Grade II) to the north, and 1 Great Scotland Yard (Grade II) to the east and rear. Whitehall House, built in 1904 rises dramatically to 6 storeys and is in a distinct 'free style Jacobethan' style immediately alongside the site. 1 Great Scotland Yard, discussed above, which once formed part of a longer terrace is a more domestically scaled Georgian townhouse that sits to the rear of the Yard.

Proposals

- 18 The application is to extend the office entrance lobby to provide the opportunity of a reception desk or waiting area with ample natural light, enhancing the 'welcome experience' and attractiveness of the office redevelopment as a whole.
- 19 The proposal provides an opportunity to enhance the appearance of the existing poor-quality shopfront. Currently this sits uncomfortably below the first-floor windows with its unattractive rendered band.



Figure 1: Existing facade

- 20 The proposed new shopfront will be raised in height to match the adjacent Clarence pub front, covering the existing rendered band and providing a timber fascia for the future retail tenant's signage, aligning with the elegant Victorian proportions of the Clarence's fascia box and reinstating the historic proportions of the shopfront.



Figure 2: Proposed facade

- 21 In reality, the buildings, behind the façade are modern – as is the existing poorly-proportioned shop front - and there is little or no historic fabric remaining. From a heritage perspective, the proposals provide an opportunity to enhance the overall façade of the buildings and their contribution that the buildings make to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 22 This is confirmed in the images produced in the Design & Access Statement which demonstrate that through the proposed enhancements to the external elevation of the building, the character and appearance of the conservation area would be enhanced by this proposal as well as the setting of nearby listed buildings. The proposals will also ensure that the quality of accommodation internally attracts the highest quality occupiers, commensurate to the historically high-status character of the area.

Compliance with national and local policy

- 23 In respect of Paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the proposed scheme ensures – and enhances - the ‘positive contribution’ that 45-51 Whitehall makes to the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area, and the setting of other listed buildings is retained.
- 24 The proposed scheme complies with Paragraph 201 of the NPPF - it certainly does not lead to ‘substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset’. It also complies with Paragraph 202 for the reasons given in detail earlier in this report – the scheme cannot be considered to harm the character and appearance of the conservation area or the setting of nearby listed building, but rather enhances them through the improved design quality of the proposals.
- 25 In positively addressing the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, the works also meet the policy requirements of the Westminster City Council Local Plan relevant to the historic built environment: Policy 39. The proposal ensures heritage assets and their settings are conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance and will preserve the character and appearance of the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area as well as the setting of the adjacent Whitehall Conservation Area.