
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2017

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 15 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G0908/W/16/3162964

4 Portland Street, Workington, Cumbria CA14 4BQ

- 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 Miss Hannah Bell against the decision of Allerdale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2/2016/0517, dated 1 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 31 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is replacement of 6 wooden windows with UPVC sliding sash and replacement door with composite door.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The description of the proposal varies between the application form and the subsequent documents. I have used the description on the decision notice as it describes the proposal more succinctly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site at 4 Portland Street is located within the Workington Conservation Area (CA), and is subject to an Article 4 direction. The CA is largely characterised by residential development, with commercial buildings on the western edge.
 5. No 4 is a three storey dwelling of a traditional design which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. The existing windows and door at the property are timber, but are clearly modern replacements. As such, these elements are out of keeping with the surroundings. Many other buildings on Portland Street have retained historic timber windows and doors of traditional style and detailing, and these strongly inform the character and appearance of the area.
 6. The existing windows comprise two panes, with a fixed light below, and a top opening light. The proposal would replace five windows to the front elevation of No 4, and a sixth to the side elevation. The new windows would all be set within the existing openings. The proposed front windows would comprise four
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- panes each, and would be vertical sliding sashes. To that extent, they would more closely reflect the character of the historic four paned windows in the street.
7. However, uPVC is a synthetic material whose smooth, shiny, modern appearance does not satisfactorily capture the character of the traditional painted timber finish which is prevalent in the area. As a result, the development would appear discordant, and out of keeping with its historic context. A brochure from the manufacturer of the proposed windows has been provided. However, in terms of the detailed design, there is insufficient detail to show that the proposed windows would accurately replicate elements such as the mouldings, horns and glazing bar profiles that are characteristic to the local area.
 8. The existing ply front door would be replaced with a composite door of six panels. Whilst the panelled design would be more traditional, the proposed material would similarly be out of keeping with the surviving historic timber painted doors in the area. In particular, the wood effect finish would not be an acceptable substitute for painted timber. Rather, it would draw attention to the new door, as wood grain would rarely show through in traditional painted joinery of this era.
 9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the appearance of the appeal building, thus failing to preserve the character and appearance of the wider conservation area. It would thus conflict with Policy S27 of the Allerdale Local Plan (Part 1) – Strategic and Development Management Policies (LP, July 2014), which seeks to conserve heritage assets, and LP Policy S4, which seeks to achieve high quality design for all development. It would also be at odds with the National Planning Policy Framework, which attaches great weight to the conservation of heritage assets.
 10. I acknowledge that the existing windows and door are falling into disrepair, and I note the appellant's position that, should the appeal be dismissed, they would leave the existing windows and door in place for reasons of cost effectiveness. However, these circumstances would not justify their replacement in unsympathetic materials.
 11. I have been referred to a number of other existing uPVC windows and doors in the wider CA. However, these have a demonstrably harmful effect on the CA, and their presence does not justify the further harm that would result from the proposed development. The appellant has also referred to a property facing the appeal site, whose windows have been boarded up. However, I am not aware of the circumstances relating to this situation, and in any case, I have considered the appeal scheme on its own merits.
 12. In support of their case, the appellant contends that the new windows would offer greater security, energy efficiency and future adaptability than the existing ones. However, they have offered no substantive evidence to demonstrate that this would be the case. I have had regard to a letter of support for the proposal, but this has not led me to a different conclusion.
 13. Whilst the harm to the significance of the conservation area would be less than substantial (in terms of the phraseology used in the NPPF), this does not mean that the harm would not be significant. Furthermore, little evidence has been provided in relation to public benefits that would outweigh that harm.

14. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into consideration, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR