
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2017

by B Bowker Mplan MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/Z/17/3173666
11-13 Bridge Street, Evesham WR11 4SQ

- 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 Mr Saqib Rashid against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref W/16/02621/PN, dated 2 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is new external concertina shutter in the lobby. Replace like for like entrance doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council raise no objection to the proposed like for like replacement of the existing door. Based on all I have seen and read, I have no reason to disagree with the Council's acceptance of this matter. Consequently, my determination of the appeal focusses on the external concertina shutter.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Evesham Conservation Area (ECA).

Reasons

4. No 11 – 13 Bridge Street is a three storey building with ground floor shop surrounded predominantly by retail use. The site is located within the ECA the special interest of which is derived from its long history evident in its buildings, medieval urban form, the number and quality of historic buildings, and the high level of survival of historic fabric and architectural detailing. The ECA notes that the role of Bridge Street as a main thoroughfare remains and that it is part of the medieval town.
 5. The Council consider Nos 11-13 to be of no architectural or historical merit and that the form and scale of the building is not in keeping with the wider street scene. In addition, the ECA appraisal identifies the appeal building as a negative feature. However, the appraisal goes on to state that negative features in the ECA should avoid becoming too dominant through future additions and alterations.
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6. During my site visit, I could not see any shopfronts with concertina shutters in the surrounding area along Bridge Street. I also saw that despite the form and scale of the appeal building, it is not an overly noticeable feature in the street scene. I appreciate that the shutters would only be used when the shop is closed. As the shutters have already been erected, I could see that the effect of them when not in use is modest. However, with no similar shutters in the vicinity, the proposal would increase the prominence of the building in the street scene when the shop is closed. When closed, the shutters would be noticeable from public vantage points along Bridge Street.
7. Photographs of a concertina shutter used by the occupying business at a store in a conservation area in Nottingham have been submitted in support of the appeal. However, based on the limited information provided, I am unable to make any meaningful comparisons with the proposal before me. Furthermore, it is highly likely that both the local character and policy requirements applicable to the shutter at Nottingham are different. Moreover, despite the use of a decorative grill, the proposal would introduce a modern and discordant feature that is not characteristic of the ECA.
8. The adopted Wychavon Shop Front Design Guide (SFDG) identifies that externally fitted shutters have a significant detrimental visual impact. This is the case with the proposal before me, and in this respect, the shutter would be contrary to guidance contained in the SFDG.
9. In the context of paragraphs 131- 134 the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I consider the extent of harm to the significance of the ECA to be less than substantial. In such circumstances, the Framework advises to weigh harm against the public benefits associated with the proposal. Security benefits would arise, including the prevention of anti-social behaviour in the recessed lobby. These benefits attract modest weight in favour of the proposal.
10. Whilst the harm of the proposal to the ECA would be less than substantial, section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is clear in that harm should be given considerable importance and weight. In this context, the weight afforded to the proposal's harm to the ECA would outweigh the modest benefits described above.
11. Therefore the proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the ECA as a whole. Consequently the proposal would be contrary to Policies SWDP6 and SWDP24 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan and paragraphs 131 – 134 of the Framework. Combined, these policies seek to ensure that development conserves and enhances the significance of heritage assets such as conservation areas.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, and having taken all matters raised into account, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

B Bowker

INSPECTOR