
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2017

by JP Roberts BSc(Hons), LLB(Hons), MRTPI

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

Decision date: 30th June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/W/17/3168719
25 Hendford, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 1UN

- 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 Mostly Property Ltd against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/02914/FUL, dated 20 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 5 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is replacement windows x 2.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. Notwithstanding the description of the application given above, the submitted application documents make it clear that the application seeks part-retrospective permission for the installation of 2 replacement windows to the ground floor on the front elevation and a proposal to replace 2 first floor windows on the front elevation. I shall deal with the proposal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Yeovil Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal building is a semi-detached two-storey Victorian red brick building, in a south-western arm of the Yeovil Conservation Area, close to the town centre. The building is an attractive example of Victorian architecture. It possesses a number of architectural features of visual interest, characteristic of the era, such as a dressed stone bay, cusped bargeboards, brick string courses, and a scrolled stone first floor window head, with herringbone brick detailing. The upper floor also contains original, wooden framed sliding sash windows, with two panes in the upper part with decorative horns, and one in the lower part.
 5. Although there are 20th century office blocks close to the appeal site, of little architectural merit, there are also a number of Victorian buildings in the vicinity, some of which are listed. In particular, immediately to the east of the appeal site is the Masonic Hall, which is even more richly embellished, and its attractive features draw the eye to it. There are other Victorian properties on either side of the road with original windows.
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6. The replacement windows retain the pattern of the original windows, along with the decorative horns. However, the use of bright white, machine-finished UPVC with thicker frames fails to replicate the more delicate proportions of the original windows, and is devoid of the natural variation in form and texture of timber, and lacks the characteristic appearance of putty-beaded glazing bars. The combination of these features draws attention to the windows, and the loss of the finer construction detracts from the quality and appearance of the building, and contrasts sharply with the original windows and those on nearby Victorian buildings. I consider that they devalue the integrity and attractiveness of the building and harm the heritage significance of the conservation area. The harm would be "less than substantial" within the meaning of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and I shall return to this below.
7. There are other modern windows in Victorian properties in the area, which detract from the historic appearance of the properties. However, they are not so prevalent as to affect significantly the character or appearance of the area, or to undermine the significance of the conservation area as a heritage asset.
8. I therefore find on the main issue that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, and would conflict with Policies EQ2 and EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan, adopted in 2016, which respectively deal with general development (and seeks high quality development which preserves or enhances character and appearance) and the historic environment.

Other matters

9. The Framework says that in cases where less than substantial harm is caused to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
10. In this case, there may be a small public benefit resulting from reduced carbon emissions as a result of the greater energy-efficiency of the new windows. There would also be some private benefits arising from improved living conditions for tenants through the avoidance of condensation and mould and there would be advantages in safety and ease of use. However, I am not convinced that similar benefits could not be gained from the use of well-designed timber windows, or the use of secondary glazing. In any event, these benefits do not outweigh the harm that I have found.
11. I note the appellants' argument that the Council has been inconsistent with its use of reproduction street lighting and in allowing steel railings to the adjacent Masonic Hall, but these are not matters of such substance to justify the harm that I have found. I have had regard to the support offered from tenants of the property, as well as that from the Yeovil Town Council, but this is insufficient to alter my conclusion.

Conclusion

12. I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole, and conclude that, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

JP Roberts

INSPECTOR