



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2017

by Caroline Mulloy BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 14 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/W/17/3172437

49-65 Southampton Way, Southwark SE5 7SW

- 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 Big Yellow Self Storage Company Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 16/AP/4670, dated 15 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing warehouse (Use Class B8) and office buildings (Use class B1A) at 49-65 Southampton Way and the erection of a 3 and 4 storey building comprising self-storage facility (Use class B8) and flexi offices (Use class B1A) together with vehicular and pedestrian accesses, parking, associated works and landscaping.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Reason for refusal two relates to the failure to provide for appropriate planning obligations secured through the completion of a Section 106 agreement in order to make provision of employment and highway measures. A completed and signed section 106 Agreement has since been provided which contains the relevant obligations. The Council agree that this would deliver the required mitigation and would, therefore, address reason for refusal two.

Main Issue

3. Taking into account the above, the main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and whether the proposal would preserve the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is situated on the north eastern side of Southampton Way, close to the junction with Parkerhouse Street. The Burgess Business Park lies to the north which is used for industrial, storage and commercial purposes.
 5. The existing site comprises of four two storey buildings set back a consistent distance from the street frontage. The buildings are varied in appearance composed largely of brick and with a warehouse style appearance. Numbers 45-47 Southampton Way, a pair of 3 storey traditional villas, is situated to the north-west. Numbers 73, 75 and 77 Southampton Way, 3 storeys plus basements
-

traditional grade II listed dwellings lie to the south-east. The surrounding area also comprises 3-5 storey apartment blocks situated opposite, 2-3 storey traditional dwellings along Southampton Way and commercial buildings on Parkhouse Street. Consequently, the character of the area is mixed.

6. The Council does not raise concerns regarding the demolition of the existing buildings which are not deemed to be of any particular townscape merit. From everything which I have seen in submissions and on my site visit, I have no reason to disagree.
7. The building would be part 3, part 4 storey comprising of 2,545m² self-storage facility (Use class B8) and 368m² of flexible office space (Use class B1a). The building would have a pitched roof of around 13.99m high. Although there would be a slightly lower section adjacent to No 47, the majority of the building would be significantly higher. The eaves of the building would be consistent with the eaves of Nos 73-77; however, the ridge of the roof would be higher. The articulation to the front elevation breaks up the massing of the building to a degree; however, it would, nevertheless, read as a single block of significant mass and bulk which would dominate the street scene and the adjacent buildings which are of a more domestic scale.
8. The proposal would be set back from Southampton Way, and although the appellant considers that it would resolve the slightly differing building lines of Nos 45-47 and Nos 73-77 the reception area would protrude some 3m forward of No 47 and would, therefore, appear incongruous in the street scene. The appellant suggests that the break in the building line would introduce a scale shift from the proposed building down to Nos 45 and 47 and create a pause in the street scene; however, I consider that the height differential could be achieved without the need to extend beyond the building line. Furthermore, although the lowered storage section may incorporate some design elements of No 47, the main north-west elevation adjacent to No 47 would be largely blank as would the north-east and south-east elevations. The extensive use of yellow and grey cladding would draw further attention to the incongruous appearance of the proposal, in stark contrast with the predominant brick buildings along Southampton Way.
9. Taking these factors in combination, I consider that the proposal would by virtue of the siting and significant mass together with the limited fenestration and choice of materials appear as an incongruous addition which would dominate the street scene and adjacent buildings. Whilst the existing buildings may have limited architectural interest the siting, scale, massing and materials, nevertheless, ensure that they do not dominate the street scene.
10. The appellant considers that the proposal would result in a street scene more similar to that of the original street which comprised of a continuous row of houses. However, the houses would have been of a more domestic scale, with limited height and depth with long rear gardens and of a traditional design and materials, consistent with other terraces in the street.
11. The south-east elevation would sit adjacent to Nos 73-77 which are Grade II listed buildings. The listing describes the properties as a terrace of 3 houses dating from the early 19th Century composed of yellow brick with stucco cornice and blocking course and stucco ground floor and basement. Whilst there have been some alterations, the historic form and features are still clearly legible. The appellant has commissioned a Heritage Report (2017) which concludes that there would be a negligible adverse heritage impact arising from the proposal.

12. Although the eaves would align with the parapet of the listed buildings, the ridge of the roof would be noticeably higher. The roof would be visible in close proximity to the listed buildings and also in longer range views along Southampton Way. There would be a landscaped public footpath along the south eastern boundary of the site; however, the listed buildings would, nevertheless, be seen in the context of the significant mass and bulk of the appeal proposal, particularly the south east elevation which has limited fenestration. The scale and largely blank elevation comprised of modern materials such as grey and yellow cladding would be in stark contrast to the more domestic scale and traditional materials and features of the listed buildings. The proposal would visually compete with the listed buildings and significantly detract from their setting.
13. The proposal may provide some benefits in terms of the contribution to the local economy and the provision of employment. However, whilst the harm arising from the proposal may be less than substantial, the public benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm which I have identified.
14. For the reasons stated, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would fail to preserve the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed buildings to which I am required to have special regard and attention and to which the courts judge I am required to give considerable importance and weight. It would, therefore, conflict with Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan (2016), Strategic Policy 12 of the Core Strategy 2011 and saved Policies 3.12 and 3.13 of the Southwark Plan (2007) which collectively seek to ensure high quality design and architecture which reflects local character and ensure that development affecting heritage assets and their setting should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.
15. Furthermore, conflict arises with paragraphs 17 and 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seeks to secure high quality design which contributes positively to the character of the area. Conflict also arises with paragraphs 132 and 134 of the Framework which states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Where development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits.
16. Although Policy 3.15, conservation of the historic environment and Policy 3.18, setting of listed buildings do not fully reflect the Framework, the conflict of the proposal with these policies, nevertheless, weighs against the scheme.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons stated and taking into account all other considerations, the appeal should be dismissed.

Caroline Mulloy

Inspector