



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2019

by Adrian Caines BSc(Hons) MSc TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/Z/19/3236745
64 Denmark Hill, London SE5 8RZ

- 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 Danish Hanif (Candy Investments Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 19/AP/1787, dated 12 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is alteration of shopfront.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application was made by Mr Danish Hanif (Candy Investments Ltd). The appeal form lists the appellant as Seven Seas Property Ltd. As the right of appeal is only available to the applicant, I have taken the appellant as Mr Danish Hanif (Candy Investments Ltd).
3. At the time of my site visit it was apparent that the development had been undertaken so I have considered the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character or appearance of the Camberwell Green Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies within the Camberwell Green Conservation Area (CA). In determining this appeal, I have a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance. The CA essentially covers Camberwell Green and the main streets at the centre of Camberwell, with primarily commercial frontages comprising shops, food and drink establishments and services. The significance of the CA derives from the groups of buildings which combine into frontages to define streets, spaces and views. The street frontages formed by shop buildings are essential to its distinctive urban form.
6. No 64 is a ground floor retail premises within one of the older more traditional buildings, which forms part of a continuous terrace comprising buildings of different ages on the west side of Denmark Hill. The building is not listed, but it has a distinctive symmetry and quality detailing to the upper floors, which I

consider contributes positively to the character and appearance of the CA. The individual ground floor units have been subjected to modern shopfront alterations and as such, lack the same cohesive identity and quality of the upper floors. However, some architectural and historic interest remains at ground floor in the form of traditional shopfront corbels at each end of the building, including on the appeal premises. Immediately adjacent to the appeal premises is an attractive three storey building with a traditionally designed timber shopfront, and I observed other good examples of timber shopfronts opposite, but also other discordant modern ones along Denmark Hill, as reflected in the appellant's audit.

7. The Camberwell Green Conservation Area Appraisal (CA Appraisal) states that the form and design of shopfronts strongly influences the character of the CA and that the quality of the CA is marred by badly designed shopfronts, which are out of keeping with the building they are part of. Based on my own observations, I agree. Indeed, the appeal premises is one such example.
8. The CA Appraisal encourages the redesign of intrusive shopfronts along Denmark Hill in accordance with its shopfront design guidelines to enhance the character of the street. It advises that shopfronts in traditional buildings should be constructed of mostly traditional materials and made up of elements including pilasters and stall risers.
9. The shopfront that has been installed at No 64 is a mundane configuration of large glazing panels within modern aluminium frames. The central doorway is not clearly expressed and the absence of a stall riser results in the shopfront appearing structurally weak. Moreover, it has been installed flush with the level of the pilasters, such that they merge as one with a boxy character that appears to project out from the façade, thereby exacerbating its prominence. Notwithstanding the other unsympathetic shopfronts within the building, it is a discordant addition, which does not complement the period and style of the building into which it is fitted, and makes a poor contribution to its architectural composition and to the quality of the wider area.
10. The appellant contends that the proposal is an improvement on the appearance of the previous aluminium shopfront and compares favourably with many shopfronts in the immediate vicinity, some of which are said to have been recently approved by the Council. I do not have the details of those approvals or the circumstances behind them, however, the inadequacies of the former shopfront and of other shopfronts which I consider detract from the character of the CA are not good examples to follow. As such, they do not provide sufficient justification for the proposal that has to be considered on its individual merits in relation to its own impact on the host building and the CA.
11. For all these reasons, I conclude that the development has failed to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, thereby causing harm to its significance as a heritage asset. This is contrary to Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan (2016), Saved Policies 3.12, 3.13 and 3.16 of the Southwark Plan (2007) and Strategic Policy 12 of the Southwark Core Strategy (2011), which collectively seek a high quality of design and to ensure that development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.
12. In reasoning the above conclusion, I consider that the harm caused to the designated heritage asset is 'less than substantial' in the terms of paragraph

196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), and is therefore required to be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

13. The appellant states that the development will ensure that a vacant unit is brought back into use, but the premises is no longer vacant, and in any event, this could have been equally achieved with a more sympathetic design. Furthermore, even though the previous shopfront did not contribute positively to the CA, the substitution of one harmful element with another has very limited weight as a benefit. Accordingly, there are no public benefits identified that can be considered to outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons above, I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the relevant identified policies of the development plan, and the Framework, and therefore the appeal should be dismissed.

Adrian Caines

INSPECTOR