The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2020

by S Tudhope LLB (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/D/20/3246269
Steps Corner, 101 High Street, Aldeburgh IP15 5AU

- 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 Nigel Adams against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
- The application Ref DC/19/3780/FUL, dated 24 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 November 2019.
- The development proposed is the removal of the existing pitched roof and the re-building of a new dormered roof to contain 2nos new bedrooms each with en-suite bathroom.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building, Steps Corner; whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Aldeburgh Conservation Area (ACA) and the effect on the setting of the Grade II listed buildings, 2-10 Town Steps and Dart Cottage.

Reasons

3. The appeal building, Steps Corner (No 101), is a two storey dwelling dating from the 19th century. It fronts the High Street at its junction with the entrance to the Town Steps, which rise steeply westward away from the High Street. On the opposite side of the entrance to the Town Steps is a two storey grade II listed building, Dart Cottage (No 99), c1796. Behind No 101 is another grade II listed building, 2-10 Town Steps, a terrace of 5 houses, c1830.

4. Whilst the appeal building is not locally or statutorily listed, it is situated within the ACA and as such benefits from statutory protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). I am required under section 72(1) of the Act to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

5. I am also required under Section 66(1) of the Act, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

6. The character of the Conservation Area arises from the variety of buildings of different ages, styles, forms and heights. The Aldeburgh Conservation Area Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document 2013 (ACAA) states that the significance of the ACA lies in the evidence of a historic sea-side town.

7. The appeal building is of modest proportions and has been restored following bomb damage in 1942. It is specifically mentioned in the ACAA and, by virtue of its gable end flint detailing and position at the entrance to the Town Steps, makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The ACAA identifies the appeal site location as important and No 101 forms part of a key view eastward from the top of the Town Steps.

8. The proposal would see the addition of a second-floor level, achieved by raising of the elevations and the addition of a new roof with increased pitch. Dormer windows are proposed to the front and roof lights to the rear to serve the proposed bedrooms and bathrooms. The proposal would also see the replacement of the modern casement windows with windows more sympathetic to the building's age and location. I acknowledge that the existing roof does not provide any useful storage space and may be in need of maintenance. However, the significant increase in the overall height of this building would result in this prominent, yet not dominant building, overwhelming the nearby listed buildings, 2-10 Town Steps and No 99.

9. I further acknowledge that the buildings within the ACA vary greatly in type and form, that other three storey buildings are present within the High Street and that the appeal property itself has changed over time. However, the proposed development would not sit comfortably within the street scene. The resultant building would be vertically elongated, creating an oddly proportioned, dominant feature in this prominent and important position. The result would be a building uncharacteristic of the immediate area. In addition, the proposed development would appear at odds with, and be unsympathetic to, the appearance of the host building and would detract from the positive contribution it otherwise makes to the significance of the character and appearance of the ACA.

10. The harmful effect of the proposed increase in height would be exacerbated by the number of dormers and rooflights that would punctuate and dominate the roof. Although there are other examples of similar styles of dormers within the ACA, including in the rear roof slope of 2-10 Town Steps, these are the exception in the street scene and in the roofscape visible from the top of the Town Steps, rather than prevalent features. The resultant building, by virtue of its height and cluttered roofscape, would interrupt and negatively impact the important key view from the top of the Town Steps towards the North Lookout Tower and the sea.

11. Consequently, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host building, the significance of the ACA and the setting of nearby listed buildings. Thus, the proposal conflicts with Policies SP1, SP22 and DM21 of the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan Core Strategy & Development Management Policies Development Plan Document, 2013. Together and amongst other matters these policies seek to prevent development that detracts from the character of its surroundings and requires development proposals to relate well to scale and character.

Other Matter

12. The site lies within the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Council has not objected on the basis of the effect of the proposal on the AONB and from the evidence before me I see no reason to disagree.

Planning Balance

13. In the context of paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) the harm caused to the heritage assets would be less than substantial. Paragraph 193 of the Framework 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 a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm, as in this case, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

14. The proposal would provide additional living accommodation and meet the needs of the appellant. There would also be an overall improvement in the thermal efficiency, air tightness, services, finishes and fittings and fixtures. There are clearly private benefits to the proposed development. However, no public benefits have been submitted that would outweigh the harm to the heritage assets. This is a matter to which I give considerable importance and weight.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons the appeal is dismissed.

S Tudhope
Inspector