

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2020

by Mrs H Nicholls FdA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/20/3248489

6 Lower Fore Street, Saltash PL12 6JX

- 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 Avery against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA19/94393, dated 7 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is re-cladding and erection of replacement signage to the frontage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description taken from the appellant's application form refers to the re-cladding of the building, although from the evidence it appears that the former painted rough render exterior is still intact beneath the cladding boards. Additionally, it is suggested that the signage is the subject of a separate advertisement consent application which is not before me as part of the appeal.
3. The reason for refusal in the Council's decision notice omits reference to any specific policies of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010 – 2030 (adopted 2016) (CLP) with which the proposal was found to be in conflict. The evidence suggests that the relevant Policies are 12 and 24, which relate to design and the historic environment respectively.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of Saltash Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a mid-terrace, ground floor shop with a residential unit above. From the evidence, the ground floor previously had sections of painted rough render above, below and separating the sections of modern glazing. The signage did not extend the full width of the shop frontage and looked disproportionate. The entire frontage of the building, including the upper floor, had a tired appearance.
6. The development has resulted in the ground floor section of the building been clad with a grey fibre cement boarding. The cladding encases the guttering downpipe on the eastern side of the building which results in an uneven projection from the building frontage on that side. The windows are as

previously installed, but the depth of the cladding appears to make the openings more recessed. The upper storey of the building has not been altered.

7. The appeal site falls within the Saltash Conservation Area (CA) which was designated in 1994. The Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey – Historic characterisation for regeneration report¹ (CSUS report) suggests that the special qualities of the CA derive from its origins as a medieval planted town with original medieval street pattern and from its diversity of architectural styles, including both significant buildings and modest dwellings. Insofar as the appeal building has retained some typical Georgian architectural features which is one of the range of present architectural styles, it contributes in a small, but positive way to its significance.
8. The CSUS report also sets out that Saltash shopping area should be regenerated through means such as the reinstatement or restoration of historic shopfronts and through good consistent design of modern shopfronts. However, given the age of the report and the acknowledgement in the Council's report that the previous shopfront was modern and poor quality, there is little evidence that these recommendations have been consistently implemented.
9. The appeal proposal has modernised the ground floor of the building. Whilst the fibre cement boarding is not as authentic a material as may otherwise be desirable, it at least provides a consistency in colour and finish with reduced likelihood of it becoming tired and weathered with age. Though the cladding adds additional bulk to the ground floor and projects unevenly, these aspects are not particularly apparent in the context of the overall streetscene. The sleek finish provided by the cladding results in a minor uplift compared to the tired appearance of the former shopfront.
10. Though the Council has raised that there were more subtle ways of enhancing the shopfront, through sensitive repairs and repainting, the cladding provides an aesthetic quality to the building that could not have otherwise been achieved. Though there are no other examples of similar cladding elsewhere along Lower Fore Street, the wide variety of architectural styles and detailing provides a varied streetscene into which the development assimilates sufficiently well. Overall, the building has retained its Georgian proportions and the unaltered upper storey maintains a range of original features of the building. The cladding is also removable, should, in the future, the need arise to renew any built elements of the ground floor.
11. In view of this issue, the development at least preserves the character and the appearance of Saltash Conservation Area. It therefore complies with Policies 12 and 24 of the CLP, which, amongst other things, seek to maintain the special character and appearance of Conservation Areas. For similar reasons, it would also comply with the National Planning Policy Framework. As the draft Saltash Neighbourhood Development Plan has not yet been submitted for examination, I attribute limited weight to it.

Other Matters

12. The Council indicate that the development would create a precedent for use of such a cladding treatment elsewhere in the CA. Each proposal is to be considered on its own merits and there is limited cogent evidence to suggest

¹ Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey – Historic characterisation for regeneration – Saltash – September 2005

that similar proposals would be likely to come forward in the event that the cladding were retained on the appeal building.

13. I note that the appellant has offered to accept a condition to enhance the upper part of the front elevation. Notwithstanding the conflicting evidence in respect of the ownership of the upper storey, and that it would be desirable for it to receive some maintenance, the acceptability of this appeal does not rest on that particular matter.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above, the appeal is allowed. As the proposal is retrospective and no further alterations are detailed in the submitted plan (Ref 1850-02 A), it is not necessary to impose any planning conditions.

Hollie Nicholls

INSPECTOR