



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 October 2020

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/W/20/3246562

2 Church Street, Saffron Walden CB10 1JW

- 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 Mulberry House Farm LLP against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref UTT/19/1948/FUL, dated 6 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is extension to provide additional B1(a) office space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special interest of the listed building known as 14 High Street and the character and appearance of Saffron Walden Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. 14 High Street is listed Grade II and dates from the early 19th century. It is two storey and constructed from yellow gault brick with a slate roof. It turns the corner between the High Street and Church Street with an ornate historic shopfront and a cast-iron balcony above. There are timber sash windows on both road frontages. An historic two storey lean-to extension on Church Street contains timber sash windows at ground and first floor. At least three of these windows, on the elevation facing north-east, appear to be historic in terms of their detailing including glass panes, glazing bars and sash cords. The above features, including these three windows, contribute to the architectural and historic interest of the listed building and inform its significance.
4. Saffron Walden Conservation Area covers the historic core of the town and contains buildings ranging from the medieval to the modern. Its character and appearance, as well as its significance, is strongly influenced by the richness of the built environment, the network of historic streets, and the trade and commerce that takes place within the town centre. 14 High Street due to its prominent corner location, the quality of architectural details, and its commercial function, contributes greatly to the conservation area.
5. The appeal site adjoins the two-storey lean-to extension and the timber windows that face north-east. The site includes an existing single storey addition between the two storey lean-to and the two storey Freemasons Hall. Part of the addition, with a moulded doorway through to a rear yard appears

- contemporary with the two-storey lean-to. The remainder contains a modern shopfront and mono-pitch slate roof. This element appeared rather unsightly and out of keeping with its historic surroundings based on images submitted by the appellant. However, the shopfront has been recently refurbished as an artisan bakery and has a more sympathetic appearance with both the listed building and the conservation area. Thus, the appeal site in its current form contributes positively to the significance of both designated heritage assets.
6. The proposed first floor extension would be subservient to the host building at 14 High Street and would incorporate sympathetic architectural detailing and materials. The infilling of the gap between the two storey buildings would not detract from the overall street scene. The replacement shopfront would mimic many of the details of the historic shopfront.
 7. However, the first floor part of the extension would involve the blocking up of one historic timber sash window on the two-storey lean-to and the removal and lowering of the cill of another to provide a doorway through to the new office space. This would result in the loss of historic fabric in terms of brickwork and window joinery and cause harm to the significance of the listed building and conservation area.
 8. The harm would be less than substantial but still important given the loss of historic fabric. Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) state that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset irrespective of the level of harm, with clear and convincing justification for any harm or loss. NPPF paragraph 196 requires less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits.
 9. It is not evident that the proposal is necessary to secure the commercial re-use of the appeal site given its current active use as a bakery. Thus, little weight that can be afforded to this public benefit. The design and proportions of the extension would be sympathetic to its surroundings but the recent refurbishment has improved the appearance along Church Street in any case. Thus, public benefits relating to any improvement would be moderate at best. Taking into account the loss of historic fabric, I consider that insufficient justification has been provided in terms of public benefits to outweigh the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets.
 10. In conclusion, the proposal would not preserve or enhance the special interest of the listed building known as 14 High Street or preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Saffron Walden Conservation Area. Therefore, it would not accord with Policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 which requires schemes to safeguard conservation areas and listed buildings. The proposal would also not comply with NPPF paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 as set out above.

Conclusion

11. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR