



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 October 2020

by M Russell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/G2815/W/20/3256898 26 High Street, Rushden NN10 0PW

- 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 Mike Webb - Chadwell Property Maintenance against the decision of East Northants District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01876/FUL, dated 26 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is replacement of timber windows to first and second floors with uPVC of similar style and appearance.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The replacement windows were already in situ at the time of my site visit. I have therefore assessed the proposal on the basis that it is made retrospectively.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Rushden Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The CA relates to the historic core of Rushden. On High Street its significance lies in the number and quality of historic buildings and the broadly linear street pattern. Whilst modern shop fronts are prevalent at ground floor level, upper floors often retain traditional characteristics which add to the significance of the CA. No 26 is one such building and is identified as a 'positive building' on the Rushden CA Townscape Appraisal Map. It exhibits attractive traditional features to its upper floors including stone headers and cills to windows, red brickwork with decorative cornice and distinctive stonework to a third-floor gabled window.
5. The East Northamptonshire Council – Rushden Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) specifically recognises that some of the unlisted buildings in the CA have been adversely affected by the replacement of timber framed windows with uPVC. During my site visit and from the photographs provided, I noted that there is a visible contrast between the previous painted timber framed single glazed windows and the uPVC framed double glazed units that

have replaced them. In particular, the windows to the left-hand side of the building façade lack the delineation evident on the mouldings of the previous timber frames. The previous frames also included glazing bars to the left-hand second-floor windows. The loss of such detailing emphasises the incongruity of the contemporary materials and their detrimental impact on the setting of the CA.

6. My attention has been drawn to other properties in the CA with uPVC window frames. However, the use of uPVC window frames in the appeal proposal adds to an incremental erosion of the elements that add to the significance of the CA. I do not therefore find these other examples act as justification for the development.
7. Taking into account the proposal relates to the upper floors of a single unit in the CA, the development would result in less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the CA. Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
8. The appellant suggests that the uPVC frames have better performance in terms of insulation and noise mitigation. However, I have no substantive evidence before me to suggest that timber framed replacements could not perform sufficiently. I am therefore not convinced that the proposals are a necessity to secure the optimum viable use of the building. I must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the setting of the CA. Taking the above issues into consideration, I find that there are no public benefits of a sufficient weight to outweigh the less than substantial harm that would result from the proposal.
9. I conclude, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the CA. Consequently, in that regard, the development would be contrary to Policy 2 (Historic Environment) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2016) and Policy EN1 (Design in Development) of the Rushden Neighbourhood Plan (2018) and the Framework.

Other Matters

10. The suggestion that purpose built timber frames would be more costly and that uPVC windows require less maintenance are private matters for the owners of the building and do not outweigh the harm identified.

Conclusion

11. For the above reasons the appeal is dismissed.

M Russell

INSPECTOR