
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2020

by H Butcher BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W1905/Y/20/3246309

The Bell Hotel, 1 Burford Street, Hoddesdon, Herts EN11 8HP

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mark Bickle against the decision of Broxbourne Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 07/19/0965/LB, received by the Council on 14 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 January 2020.
 - The works proposed are described as: 'Replaced old signs with new signs'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. An application for listed building consent for four externally illuminated signs fixed to the exterior of The Bell Hotel was made to the Council and refused. It also appears a separate application was made for advertisement consent which was also refused. This appeal, however, only concerns the refusal of listed building consent.
3. Since the appeal was made the Council have adopted The Broxbourne Local Plan (June 2020) which replaces the previous Borough of Broxbourne Local Plan Second Review 2001-2011 (December 2005). The relevant newly adopted policies are cited in the Council's decision letter, so all parties will have been aware of them, and the overall thrust of the policies has not changed from that of the previous local plan. Neither party would therefore be prejudiced by my determining the appeal on the basis of the newly adopted plan.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the advertisements on the special architectural and historic interest of The Bell Hotel, which is Grade II listed, and linked to that, whether they would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Hoddesdon Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The Bell Hotel is a Grade II listed building dating from the 16th Century. It has various historic architectural features of interest such as a jettied upper floor and a plaster finish of scalloped pargetting; although at the southern end there is exposed timber frame with brick nogging. The fenestration also adds to the architectural interest of the building with 3/6 pane sash windows in the upper

- floor and three canted sash window bays at ground floor, all arranged in an ad hoc manner. The building clearly displays the craftsmanship and architectural taste of the period from which it dates, and this gives it historic and aesthetic value, all of which contribute to its significance as a heritage asset.
6. The Bell Hotel is located in the Hoddesdon Conservation Area and it sits within a cluster of historic and listed buildings at the centre of this historic market town. The Bell Hotel therefore contributes to the significance of the conservation area being one such historic building.
 7. At the time of my site visit the signs were in place. They are formed from modern materials; namely aluminium frames and white Perspex which gives them a shiny finish. This is in stark contrast to the traditional materials used in the host building which are generally more muted with a matt finish. Whilst the colour scheme of the adverts might be appropriate this does not overcome the harm in terms of the materials used.
 8. All four signs are of the same size and have a 'landscape' layout and are positioned in the spaces above or between the windows at first floor. The adverts between windows fill these spaces quite tightly almost abutting the windows either side giving a cramped appearance. They also sit conspicuously lower than the first-floor windows. Furthermore, the signs are also quite large and dominant being wider than many of the windows in the building.
 9. In terms of design, the sign towards the south side of the building depicts a number of images pertaining to, amongst other things, well-known social media and broadcaster/telecommunications providers. This not only creates an overly busy appearance but is also visually incongruous on a heritage building.
 10. I note the appellant's reference to another listed building opposite with colourful signage. However, I do not have full details before me regarding this in order to make any meaningful comparison. In any event, it would not justify the harm I have found.
 11. Overall, the materials, size, positioning and design of the adverts appears ill conceived and detracts from the architecture and historic interest of the building. The signs are clearly visible from the Hoddesdon Conservation Area therefore they also neither preserve nor enhance its character or appearance. In addition to this the signs would conflict with Policies HE1 and HE2 of the Local Plan 2018-2033 which seek to protect the historic environment.
 12. The harm I have found would be 'less than substantial' for the purposes of para 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Any such harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Whilst the appellant has clearly gone to efforts to renovate the premises this does not overcome the harm I have found which must be given considerable importance and weight in the balancing exercise.
 13. The appeal is dismissed.

Hayley Butcher

INSPECTOR