



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 10 November 2020

by R Sabu BA (Hons), BArch, MA, PgDip ARB RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/T5150/W/20/3254408

Willesden Post Office, 78 High Road, London NW10 2PX

- 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 Praveen Palle against the decision of London Borough of Brent.
 - The application Ref 20/0326, dated 31 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 31 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as, 'to change or alter the existing shopfront into full length shopfront and to install internal roller shutters for security'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Willesden Green Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The site is located in a prominent corner position within the CA, the significance of which lies in the evidence of the development of historic commercial architecture. The existing shopfront features a stone stall riser and timber window frames such that the resultant attractive, traditional appearance provides a positive contribution to the significance of the CA.
4. The proposal includes the removal of the stall riser and existing windows and their replacement with full height glazed panels. While I acknowledge the proposed position of the mullions and the retention of the door and ATM positions, these proposals would nevertheless result in a shopfront that would remove much of the evidence of the historic development of the commercial elevation and would be lacking in architectural detail. Therefore, given the position of the site on a prominent junction of the High Road, the proposal would significantly diminish the significance of the CA.
5. While I note the variety of other shopfronts in the area, including other corner properties that do not have such stall risers, they are generally in less prominent positions on the High Road and given the roof design at the top of the appeal building, the eye is drawn to this unit more than others in the vicinity. Therefore, the varied shopfront styles in the area do not justify the harm identified.

6. While I acknowledge the evidence relating to levels of daylight, given the height of the existing windows, I am not persuaded that any such benefit that would result from the proposed full height glazing would override the harm to the CA identified above. With regard to the removal of existing advertisements, there is no certainty that the proposal would not prevent further advertisements and window displays.
7. The proposal also includes internal solid shutters. These would present a harsh elevation to the street during closed hours that would result in an oppressive atmosphere on the street thereby diminishing the character and appearance of the CA. While I note the evidence regarding security, there is little substantial evidence to demonstrate that alternative shutter types would not be suitable. However, since the proposed shutter would be internal, I see no reason why details cannot be secured by a suitably worded condition.
8. Consequently, the proposed development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Therefore, it would conflict with Policy DMP1 of the Development Management Policies November 2016 (DMP), which among other things require developments that complement the locality. It would also conflict with DMP Policy DMP4A which require that proposals for shop fronts should complement the building and with DMP Policy DMP7 which seek development that sustain and enhance the significance of the heritage asset. It would also conflict with Shopfronts SPD 3 Supplementary Planning Document June 2018.
9. Since Policies DMP 2 and DMP 4 relate to diversity and change of use, they are not directly relevant to this main issue.
10. The harm identified would be less than substantial in the terms of paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Given the great weight to be attached to the asset's conservation and the statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, there would not be any public benefits in the terms identified by the appellant that would outweigh the harm identified.

Other Matters

11. I acknowledge that there were not any local objections to the planning application or appeal and that there are no listed buildings located on or adjacent to the site. However, for the reasons given above this has not altered my overall decision.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

R Sabu

INSPECTOR