



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2020

by Alison Scott BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/20/3245462

Ordnance Arms, Beresford Square, Woolwich SE18 6AY

- 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 F Arnold, Anderson Management against the decision of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 18/1515/F, dated 4 May 2018, was refused by notice dated 26 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is Conversion and change of use of two upper floors to 6 flats, alteration to roof to provide roof terrace, election of stair well, lift and balconies within recessed area fronting Woolwich New Road and alterations to ground floor shop front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of the proposal was amended by the Council and described as 'Conversion of first and second floors into 4 x 2-bed and 2 x 1-bed residential units, change of use of ground floor of 18A Beresford Square from a Beauty Salon (Class A1) to a Public House (Class A4) with internal alterations, construction of a two-storey infill extension at first and second floor, alterations to shopfronts on east and west elevations and alterations to the roof to provide a roof terrace and stairwell and lift overrun.' This description accurately describes the development before me and has been used by the appellant within their appeal form.
3. For the avoidance of doubt, the plans the Council determined the application on have been confirmed by both parties and therefore I am satisfied that the correct information is before me.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal property as a locally listed building and the Woolwich Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property forms part of an island of buildings within the public square of Beresford Square within the Woolwich Conservation Area (CA) and is also locally listed. The area is characterised by its historic dense street patterns

and Beresford Square's association as a meeting place and its historic evolution as a marketplace.

6. From the evidence available to me, I consider that the special interest and significance of the appeal property is principally derived from its aesthetic designed value as a Victorian public house. The building is of significant architectural merit, is a non-designated heritage asset and contributes positively to the character and appearance of the CA.
7. It is the physical alterations to the fabric of the building that is in contention between the parties. A combination of changes is proposed to the exterior of the building including an infill extension to the void area and staircase that extends to the roof level with private terrace, and alterations to an attached shop front unit, new entrance openings, new fenestration with stall risers clad in tiles, and pilasters clad in marble.
8. As required by paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework, (the Framework), the applicant shall describe the significance of any heritage assets affected. The Heritage Statement and Design and Access Statement which accompanied the appeal provides limited information or analysis on the significance of the locally listed building, or how the proposals would contribute positively to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset, or to the character or appearance of the CA.
9. Assessing the content of the submitted plans, its relationship with the host building has been largely omitted from the application plans. This is especially important as the appeal building contains significant decorative detail and these original historic features remain largely unaltered, especially from above the ground floor level. The appeal site should be read as one building. The plans provide limited information to demonstrate how the proposed new elements would sit in context with the building, and respond to the existing architectural characteristics of it, or relate to its significance.
10. Furthermore, in respect of several elements of the proposal, the submitted plans are ambiguous in a number of critical aspects including the lack of any illustrative details or specification for the proposed new entrances, windows, pilasters and stall risers. The extent of these works and their effect on the significance of the building is therefore unclear.
11. Due to the extent of, and the degree of ambiguity over what is proposed, it would be unacceptable to leave such matters to be controlled by conditions.
12. To conclude on this element, the information before me falls short of that which is sufficient to satisfactorily understand the potential impact of the proposal on the building's significance.
13. However, whilst I have reached the above conclusion, as is required of me, I will now go on to assess the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the CA.

Infill extension and roof alterations

14. The proposed in-fill extension would be located to the New Woolwich Road elevation between a linked extension with the adjacent building, and set back from the front building line. It is intended to create a modern glass curtain wall

to conceal the new staircase but also to reveal brickwork behind in order to reveal the original building here.

15. An illustrated example of glazing panel has been included within the appeal submission. However, no details of scale, proportion or finish have been provided. Given the vertical emphasis of the building and the need for careful alignment, that is furthermore not demonstrated in full context with the host building or indeed the adjacent attached building, the proposed extension would therefore not appear as a sympathetic addition to the host building.
16. The roof is an attractive feature of the building as the turret, chimney stacks, roof forms and parapet walls all add to its character and make a positive contribution to the CA. They are seen from both close quarters of the site and longer range views.
17. A new stair access leading to the external roof area and lift over run as well as a glazed terrace enclosure which is intended to surround a large area of the roof and positioned close to its edges, are proposed.
18. From the detail of the submitted plans, a bulky form of lift enclosure would inevitably be visible within the street scene and from longer range views, especially from the north east and north west, as would the glazed terrace enclosure. As the roofscape is an integral part of the fabric of the building, as a consequence of proposed development to the roof level, I can only conclude that based on the information before me, it would result in harm arising to the roofscape.
19. Therefore, both the infill element and roof alterations as demonstrated would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA.

Shop front

20. The plans of the proposed shop front illustrate it in isolation and an additional plan illustrates the shopfront with part of the existing first floor attached as a photomontage. This demonstrates that the proposed pilasters do not align with those of the floors above. Neither does the proposed fenestration correspond proportionally with the vertical window alignment above.
21. Due to the imbalance that would be created, the shopfront would result in harm arising to the host building, and to the character and appearance of the CA.

Conclusion on Main Issue

22. Bringing all heritage matters together, having had regard to the proposed development and giving significant weight to the non-designated heritage asset's conservation, I conclude that it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the development would preserve its special interest. It would therefore not meet the statutory requirement to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation) Act 1990 (as amended).
23. On that basis, the scheme would not accord with Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan (2016) for development to have regard to local character and to be of highest architectural quality, and protect heritage assets. The proposal would conflict with the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed

Policies (2014) Policies DH1, DH3, DH(h), and DH(j) in their collective aims for development to achieve high quality design and protect heritage assets, as well as conflict with the Woolwich Town Centre Heritage Study (2018) and the Design Guidance for Shopfronts (2005).

24. Although the site is located close to listed buildings, I find no conflict with the proposal and Policy DH(i) Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014).

Other Matters

25. The addition of homes in the town centre could both make effective use of land and lead to economic advantages. However, these modest benefits of the proposal must be weighed against the harm arising to the significance of the heritage assets.
26. The appellant raises the protracted nature of the planning process although any complaints regarding the Council's service should be in the first place directed to them, as is not within my remit to comment.

Overall Balance

27. Taking account of paragraph 196 of the Framework, I have found that the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. The public benefits of improved accessibility to the building and the creation of additional homes would not outweigh the harm I have identified, particularly as I have no evidence that these benefits could not be achieved through other, more sympathetic, means.

Conclusion

28. For the reasons set out above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Alison Scott

INSPECTOR