



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 13 October 2020 by S Witherley CIHCM MRTPI

Decision by Chris Preston BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/G0908/W/20/3255141

21 Finkle Street, Workington, CA14 2BE

- 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 Paul Berwick against the decision of Allerdale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref FULL/2019/0252, dated 28 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 26 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is self-contained maisonette linked with adjoining cafe.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. No. 21 is a two-storey traditional building with a single storey side extension located in a short shopping parade within a town centre location. Within the streetscape there are a variety of buildings comprising of different forms, architectural detailing and materials.
5. The proposal seeks to extend above the existing single storey flat roof element and create a self-contained maisonette. The drawings indicate that the proposal would be built up to the front façade of the original two storey building with its height level with the original projecting cornice located below the squared off pediment. The proposal would see the exposed first floor flank wall of No. 21, which is dressed in red brick with dressed sandstone, covered over by the development.
6. The site sits opposite the Workington Conservation Area (WCA), its significance deriving from the form and layout of the buildings sited within a linear street pattern.
7. Views of the first-floor flank wall along with the attractive cornice and pediment are taken from along Pow Street and Finkle Street from the east. These views

also take in the varied forms of buildings and the range of materials used throughout this part of the streetscape, including those buildings located within the adjacent WCA. Whilst the original red brick and dressed sandstone would no longer be visible upon the flank wall at first floor, the drawings, whilst not detailed, indicate that the visually prominent and attractive elements of the front and upper cornice and pediment would remain. This ensures that the buildings historic form and architectural detail and general character and appearance continues to be understood and appreciated from within these views. The proposal therefore represents a good standard of design and would appear sympathetic to the existing character and appearance of the building and surrounding area.

8. Given the existing mix and pattern of development along this part of Finkle Street, there would be no diminishing effect on the character and appearance of the adjacent WCA. The setting and significance of the WCA would therefore be preserved.
9. The proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area and thereby accords with Policies DM14, DM15 and S4 of the Allerdale Local Plan Part 1 Strategic and Development Management Policies (2014) (the Local Plan) which collectively seek new development, through its design integrates with its surroundings and which respect the characteristics of the area.

Conditions

10. The Council have not suggested any conditions, however, I recommend the imposition of the standard time limit condition and a condition to specify the approved plans as this provides certainty. A condition is necessary for the materials to match those that are used in the existing property to maintain the character and appearance of the area. Given the nature of these conditions, neither party would be disadvantaged by attaching them to the permission.

Conclusion

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

S Witherley

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

12. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report. Having regard to that evidence and taking account of available photographic evidence, I disagree with the recommendation to allow the appeal for the following reasons.

Character and Appearance

13. As noted above, the proposal relates to a two storey café situated on a busy thoroughfare within Workington town centre. Finkle Street contains a mix of one, two, and three storey properties which generally run directly up to the back edge of the pavement, with shopfronts at ground floor level. It is an attractive street with a combination of smaller, vernacular, terraced properties with simple design and proportions and a number of more formal buildings with

a greater degree of architectural detail. Red sandstone, painted stonework and painted render are the predominant building materials.

14. The property at the appeal site consists of a two-storey building with a single storey addition to the side. A glazed shop front with a deep fascia sign spans the entire width of the property at ground floor level. Above that the first-floor element has an attractive façade constructed from dressed sandstone with carved string courses, projecting pilasters and an elaborate moulded cornice, above which sits an impressive parapet with moulded inset panels. The dressed sandstone 'turns the corner' of the building and continues for a short distance along the gable wall before the rear section is constructed from brickwork. The parapet on the gable elevation has a curved profile which adds to the neo-classical features on the façade.
15. The use of finely dressed sandstone, the pleasing symmetry of the features and the attractive architectural detailing combine to create an imposing first floor façade which gives the impression of a building with some status. In addition, the first floor is set at a slight angle from other buildings on the street which means that the frontage is prominent when travelling in an easterly direction and the gable is particularly prominent when travelling west along Finkle Street. Although the structure is not located within the Conservation Area, the design of the façade, which includes the return on the gable elevation, contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the area.
16. The proposed first-floor addition would be constructed flush with the front elevation of the existing two storey section of the building. As a result, the dressed sandstone on the gable elevation would be built over such that it was no longer visible. The parapet wall would project above the flat roof of the proposed addition but the position and scale of the extension is such that views of it would be diminished to a significant extent. In contrast to the existing situation where the formal façade, including the frontage and the dressed stone gable, is viewed in something like its original form, the extension would significantly impinge on the ability to appreciate the attractive architectural detail of the building.
17. I recognise that the front elevation would still be visible. However, the building was clearly designed such that the entirety of the façade, including the front portion of the gable would be seen together. Those features are prominent within the street on account of the absence of any adjacent development at first floor level. The encroachment of an unsympathetic form of development would erode the positive influence of the existing building within the streetscape and detract from its sense of grandeur.
18. Overall, I find that the scale and, more precisely, the location of the proposed development fails to respond positively to the existing, distinctive, characteristics of the adjacent first floor façade. In that respect, the development is contrary to the aims of policy DM14(b) of the Local Plan. It would also cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the existing building and would not achieve a satisfactory architectural relationship with surrounding buildings, contrary to the aims of policy DM15 of the Local Plan. For the same reasons it would fail to provide the high quality design required by policy S4 of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

19. I note that the appeal site is located close to the boundary of the Workington Conservation Area which includes properties on the opposite side of Finkle Street. Little information has been provided regarding the CA but, by and large, the properties on the opposite side of the street have a simple vernacular design and the significance would appear to lie in the historical pattern of development. Although visible from within the CA the proposed extension would largely be experienced as one approached from an easterly or westerly direction along Finkle Street, in the context of the existing building at the appeal site and other properties on that side of the street. Primarily, the harm arises due to the unsympathetic nature of the proposals in relation to the design of the existing building. The development would not alter the historical pattern of development within the CA and, whilst I have identified harm to the character of the surrounding area, I am satisfied that harm would be localised such that it would not have an undue impact on the designated heritage asset.
20. The Council have indicated to the appellant that a revised scheme with the frontage set back behind the dressed sandstone on the gable end may be an acceptable solution. The appellant maintained that is not structurally possible but no evidence to that effect is before me. In addition, the appellant suggests that the existing gable end of the property could be rendered to cover the architectural features at which point they could re-apply for permission. Such work would materially alter the appearance of the building and I am not satisfied, on the information before me, that it could be carried out without the need for planning permission. As such, I attach little weight to that suggested alternative scenario. Consequently, whilst it is not for me to judge an alternative scheme, the information presented does not discount the possibility that the property could be extended at first floor level in a manner that would overcome the concerns raised in relation to the current scheme.

Other Matters

21. The Council acknowledges that paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged on account of the position relating to housing land supply within the district. I recognise that the proposal would add to the local housing supply although the weight I attach to that is limited on account of the small scale of development which would provide a single flat.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

22. For the reasons set out above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan, having regard to the concerns relating to design and the effect on the character and appearance of the building and surrounding area. Whilst the most relevant development plan policies should be considered out of date on account of the lack of a five-year housing land supply¹, those policies to which I have been referred remain consistent with the Framework with regard to the need for good design, a need which applies to all development. Consequently, I attach significant weight to those relevant policies and the conflict with the development plan.
23. In my view, the harm that would arise in those respects significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefit of the supply of an additional residential unit, having regard to the policies of the Framework taken as a whole. Consequently, the proposal does not benefit from the presumption in favour of

¹ Footnote 7 to paragraph 11 of the Framework

sustainable development. As such, there are no material considerations that outweigh the conflict with the development plan and planning permission should not be granted. Accordingly, I shall dismiss the appeal.

Chris Preston

INSPECTOR