The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2021

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/W/20/3260349
The Vine, High Street, Stockbridge SO20 6HF

- 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 Mrs D Barlow (Vine Pianos) against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
- The application Ref 19/02924/FULLN, dated 6 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 April 2020.
- The development proposed is change of use of carport to A1 retail with associated external works.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with particular reference to the impact on the heritage assets of the Stockbridge Conservation Area (SCA) and the listed buildings of The Vine and the associated stables building.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a parking area which serves a collection of retail/craft units and holiday accommodation within the site of a former public house, known as The Vine, and its outbuildings. The site comprises 23 parking spaces, including 3 within a detached, pitched roof, timber and tiled car port structure, sited adjacent to the eastern site boundary. The site lies within the SCA, and the former public house building and accompanying stables building are Grade II listed.

4. Section 72(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* as amended (the Act) requires that, with respect to development affecting buildings or other land in a conservation area, 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'

5. Section 66(1) of the Act requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

6. Paragraph 193 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* (the Framework) sets out that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

7. The Council's adopted *Stockbridge Conservation Area Policy* (1992) (the SCAP) confirms that "*The High Street is a wide hard-surfaced space fringed with a rich variety of buildings of assorted ages and styles, mostly two storeys high. Many are, or were formerly, inns serving the passing trade which has always been such an important element of the town economy"*.

8. The listed 3-storey former public house building is sited north of the application site. It dates back to the early 18th Century, with later 19th and 20th Century extensions, including a 2-storey side extension and rear additions. It is an attractive building with colour-washed brick walls under a tiled hipped roof and it fronts directly onto the High Street. Due to its height, width and position adjacent to the back of the pavement, the building is visually prominent within the public realm of the town centre.

9. The adjacent listed former stables building dates back to the 18th/19th Century. It is also sited adjacent to the back of the pavement, with a shopfront facing the High Street. It extends towards the rear of the appeal site in the form of a long, narrow, single storey building, finished in brick and timber cladding, under a tiled hipped roof. The building has an attractive vernacular design, and it remains subsidiary in scale to the former public house building.

10. The design, scale, footprint and positioning of both listed buildings reflect their historic uses as a coaching inn and stables. Both buildings are visually prominent within the street scene, and views towards the rear of the site can be seen from the High Street through the site access, which runs between the buildings.

11. To the rear of the appeal site there is a purpose-built single storey building comprising 3 units of holiday accommodation with communal landscaped open space in front, and a small stream running through. The building has been designed and positioned in a linear arrangement to reflect the character of the listed former stables building behind which it is located.

12. I find that the retail/craft/holiday lets development of the site as a whole has been carried out in a manner which respects the character and appearance of the site and the wider SCA. The current parking design and arrangement complements the sympathetic conversion of the listed buildings and new built development that has taken place at the rear of the site, and does not detract from the setting of the listed buildings. As such, I find that the site contributes positively to the character and appearance of this part of the SCA, and is representative of the historical significance of the SCA.

13. The majority of the existing parking spaces are positioned to the rear of the former public house building, between the two single storey buildings, and within the carport structure. As such, they are discretely positioned having regard to views into the site from the High Street, and when cars are parked within the spaces they do not obstruct views through the site to the frontage of the former stables building and the landscaped area at the rear of the site. The linear arrangement of buildings along the western site boundary is clearly still discernible, and the parking arrangement does not detract from it, with the

spaces to the front of these buildings being laid out in a parallel arrangement to the front of the buildings reflecting the historical linear development of the site.

14. The amount and layout of the existing parking are such that, whilst designed as a shared pedestrian and vehicle space, the car parking area includes the retention of space around and between the buildings, sufficient to provide ample room for legible pedestrian routes adjacent to the building frontages and unimpeded pedestrian access to the units. Whilst the parking spaces are not formally marked out, pedestrian and vehicle areas are delineated on the ground through variations of surface materials including paviours and cobbled areas. These provide a clear demarcation of the main access road through the site, the parking areas and pedestrian access to the various commercial units, in an attractive and visually subtle manner.

15. The proposed conversion of the car port into Class A1 retail use would form part of an expansion and diversification of Vine Pianos, which currently occupies one of the converted retail units. The appeal scheme would result in the removal of the 3 parking spaces currently within the car port. 4 new parking spaces are proposed, to offset those lost and to provide one additional space, having regard to the increase on commercial floorspace on the site.

16. The parking spaces would be accommodated by replacing a single space approved in a parallel position in front of the former stables building with 4 spaces arranged at right angles to the building and within close proximity to the front of the building and pedestrian access to the commercial units within. A new space would also be provided in front of the converted car port building, positioned in parallel with the building and close to and directly in front of the building entrance. Spaces nos. 1, 2 and 3 of the approved parking layout would be sited closer to the rear of the former public house building.

17. The available space within the appeal site in which to accommodate the additional surface parking spaces is constrained by the positioning of the existing buildings, access way, stream and communal landscaping area at the rear. As such, this has resulted in their proposed positioning in a more central part of the site and in front of the buildings, where they would have a significant impact on the spaciousness of the parking layout and how it effects the setting of the listed buildings and views into the site from the High Street.

18. The siting of the proposed parking spaces nos. 11, 12, 13 and 23, at right angles to the stables building, would be at odds with the historic narrow linear positioning of built development along the western edge of the site. The parking of cars in this area would be apparent in views from the High Street through the two listed buildings. It would detract from the setting of the front elevation of the former stables building, in particular in respect of spaces nos. 13 and 23 which would almost abut the front of the building.

19. Although on-site vehicle turning is shown to be workable through the submitted tracking drawings, the positioning of these 4 spaces, and the new space no.24, in relation to the proposed parking on the opposite sides of the central access, would result in tight on-site manoeuvring, which would be largely dependent on accurate parking being undertaken by users of the site. As such, the arrangement could easily result in some cars being parked closer to the building frontages than indicated on the proposed parking layout drawing, as drivers seek to ensure that access for other cars along the access is not

impeded. This would potentially further erode the space in front of the buildings and obstruct pedestrian access.

20. I do not find that there would be a materially harmful impact on highway safety as a result of the scheme, given the shared surface nature of the scheme and the likely low vehicle speeds associated with the carpark use. However, I find that the failure of the scheme to satisfactorily demonstrate that unobstructed pedestrian and wheelchair user accessible routes to the front of the buildings can be provided, to be an indication of the unduly cramped nature of the proposal.

21. As a result of the proposed amount of surface parking within the limited space around the buildings, I find that the proposed car parking would take on a congested, cluttered and visually dominant appearance within the site, which would detract from the setting of the listed buildings, in particular the former stables building, and the appearance of the site within the wider SCA, when viewed from the High Street.

22. I am not persuaded by the appellant's case that, as the current parking spaces are not formally laid out, the proposed parking arrangement could occur at present. The built-in variety of surfacing materials within the existing parking provides a strong delineation of the existing parking areas and spaces in front of the buildings, and, notwithstanding that the approved layout shows space no.23 in close proximity to the front of the former stables building, there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate the existing amount of parking and space adjacent to the buildings, without pedestrian and vehicle conflicts and to enable cars to access and exit the site satisfactorily.

23. As such that I find that users of the car park would be unlikely to park outside the designated parking areas and within the pedestrian and vehicular access routes as suggested by the variations in surfacing materials, thereby maintaining an appropriate amount of space around the listed buildings.

24. I have noted the appellant's willingness to use similar hard-surfacing material as existing to demarcate the proposed on-site parking spaces. Whilst I consider this to be a satisfactory method of delineating the spaces, this would not overcome my aforementioned concerns regarding the cramped nature of the proposed parking arrangement in relation to the existing buildings, nor would this overcome the visual impact arising from the parking of cars on the approved spaces and the resulting visual overdominance of parking that would potentially arise when the car park is full.

25. I have noted that, prior to the redevelopment of the site, the public house car parking comprised a tarmac surface. However, this does not outweigh or overcome the harm that I have identified in respect of the current scheme and its effect upon the existing built development on the appeal site. Moreover, my conclusion in respect of the main issue is not altered by a lack of objection from the Council's Conservation Officer.

26. The Council has raised no objection to the proposed works to the car port and neither do I, having regard to the information before me and my site inspection. The structure does not form part of the original outbuildings and the external changes to the front of the building comprising the glazing of the existing front openings would result in minimal alterations to the building, which would not significantly alter its existing character nor harm the character

and appearance of the wider SCA and the setting of the listed buildings adjacent to the appeal site.

27. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the SCA and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings of The Vine and the former stable buildings. It would therefore harm their significance as heritage assets. As such, the appeal proposal would not accord with Policies T1, E1 and E9 of the *Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan DPD Adopted Local Plan 2011-2019* (2016). These policies, amongst other aims, seek to ensure that development proposals comprise a high quality of design and local distinctiveness, make a positive contribution to sustaining or enhancing the significance of heritage assets taking account of their character, appearance and setting, and for the internal layout, access and highway network to be attractive in character, functional and accessible for all users.

28. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to Policies of the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment as set out in Chapter 16.

29. With regard to Paragraph 196 of the Framework, the harm to the conservation area and listed buildings would be no greater than 'less than substantial'. Less than substantial harm does not equate to less than substantial planning objection, and the Framework sets out the need to address the 'less than substantial harm' against the public benefits of the scheme.

30. There would be public benefits arising from the proposal. These include economic benefits associated with the expansion and diversification of an existing local business, and the positive impact it would have on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Some social and community benefits would result from the connection of the business with the local community, including religious and educational establishments. Furthermore, the proposal would be located in an accessible location, close to the services, facilities and public transport connections of Stockbridge town centre.

31. However, I have no cogent evidence before me that there are no other available premises which could accommodate the appellant's expansion plans elsewhere in Stockbridge. Whilst the aforementioned matters attract weight as public benefits, they do not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets or their settings.

Conclusion

32. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Leonard

INSPECTOR