

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 3 February 2021

by S Edwards BA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 March 2021

Appeal A Ref: APP/D1265/W/20/3261866

50 Cheap Street, Sherborne DT9 3BH

- 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 J Benjamin against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref WD/D/19/002260, dated 1 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Proposed Extension and Alterations and Change of Use to Listed Building 50 Cheap Street existing bank into commercial and residential units'.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/D1265/Y/20/3261868

50 Cheap Street, Sherborne DT9 3BH

- 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 J Benjamin against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref WD/D/19/002261, dated 1 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 July 2020.
 - The works proposed are described as 'Proposed Extension and Alterations and Change of Use to Listed Building 50 Cheap Street existing bank into commercial and residential units'.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Application for costs

3. An application for costs was made by Mr J Benjamin against Dorset Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

4. The proposal relates to a listed building located within a conservation area, and I shall therefore have special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
5. Both appeals relate to the same site, and I shall consider the Council's decisions to refuse planning permission and listed building consent in a single document, given their similarities, and in the interests of brevity.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the significance of the Grade II listed building and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Sherborne Conservation Area.

Reasons

7. Located within the commercial precinct of Sherborne, the appeal site comprises a Grade II listed building sited prominently at the junction between Cheap Street and Abbey Road. As detailed within the listing description, this is a late medieval building, which was extensively restored in 1965. It presents an imposing three-storey gable end to the Cheap Street frontage, with corbels supporting a first floor overhang. The elevation fronting Abbey Road, which is constructed of stone rubble and displays a simple tiled roofscape, is characterised by its more understated appearance.
8. Despite significant alterations over time, the appeal building retains a number of historic features, including large late medieval fireplaces at ground and first floor levels and a small round-headed stone window frame. The significance of this Grade II listed building derives primarily from its architectural and historic interest as an attractive town house dating from the medieval period. For this reason, and due to its prominent position within the street scene, the appeal building represents an important part of the medieval planned history of the settlement and thus makes a significant contribution to the special interest of the Sherborne Conservation Area as a designated heritage asset.
9. Whilst the proposed dormers would not lead to the loss of historic fabric, they would, by reason of their excessive scale, unduly stand out as incongruous and cluttered additions, which would harmfully contrast with the sweeping nature and simplicity of the building's steep pitched roof. This is also exemplified by the disproportionate size of the proposed features compared with the first floor openings.
10. Additionally, I am concerned with the siting of the dormer windows within the roof plane, which does not reflect the existing pattern of fenestration of the elevation fronting Abbey Road. One of the dormers would be particularly close to the edge of the roof and the chimney stack, which would not only give this section of roof a cramped appearance but would also unbalance the elevation as a whole. The harm would be exacerbated further by the mock Tudor design of the proposed dormer windows, which would increase their prominence within the street scene as awkward, pastiche additions.
11. Dormer windows can be found throughout the Sherborne Conservation Area, many of which are not original, but in most instances, they take the form of small, discrete additions to the roof plane designed to provide light to the top floor. In that regard, my attention has been drawn to Abbeylands, a nearby Grade II* listed building, where it is clear that such features form an integral part of the property's architectural cohesion and vernacular character. The same cannot be said of the proposed dormers, which would fail to successfully integrate well within the roofscape of the appeal building, and erode its special architectural interest.
12. As detailed above, extensive works were carried out during the 20th century, including the construction of a two-storey link structure between the appeal

building and no 1 Abbey Road. With its flat roof and rendered elevation, this addition is of no particular architectural merit, and there is no objection to its replacement. Nevertheless, and despite its somewhat rundown appearance, the link is relatively low-key and unobtrusive within the street scene.

13. The design of the proposed link, which would be extensively glazed and include a flat roof element, intends to create a visual contrast with the historic buildings either side. In order to create a subservient relationship with the main building, the new addition would also be marginally set back from the historic frontage, and this would enable the original configuration between the two neighbouring listed buildings to be understood to a degree.
14. However, the replacement link, with its glazed inserts in a Tudor style and set within timber frames, would be neither truly contemporary nor historically accurate in its design approach. It would appear as a hybrid and discordant addition, which would, by reason of the large expanses of glazing, unduly stand out within the street scene and fail to relate well to the host building, to the detriment of its significance as a designated heritage asset.
15. Given that the historic form of the building has been previously compromised, it is important to consider whether additional change would further detract from its architectural or historic interest. The rear extension, with its large mock Tudor gabled features, would constitute a disproportionate addition to a building which has already been altered and enlarged considerably. By reason of the increased bulk, massing and detailing, the extension would dominate and harmfully erode the appreciation of this aspect of the historic building.
16. The appellant considers that it would be almost impossible to view the rear extension from the public domain. However, despite being sited to the rear of the building, the proposed addition would be visible, notably from within the grounds of the nearby Methodist Church, which is also listed. Furthermore, I am mindful that listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest, irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
17. The scale of the extension, together with the mix of styles, features and materials, notably required for the creation of outdoor amenity space, would result in a form of development lacking architectural coherence. As a consequence, the appeal scheme would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building, but also the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
18. The proposed development and works would cause less than substantial harm to the Grade II listed building and the Sherborne Conservation Area, to which I afford considerable importance and weight. In accordance with paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
19. The proposal would assist with bringing the appeal premises back to viable use, and secure their long term future as designated heritage assets. It would support the economy and make a contribution towards housing supply and choice within an accessible location. The appellant also argues that the appeal scheme would reduce the pressure to provide more homes outside of the

settlement boundaries of towns and villages in Dorset. These benefits are afforded moderate weight.

20. The removal of the existing link would preserve the significance of the Grade II listed building. However, the impact resulting from the link's replacement would override any public benefit gained from its loss. Overall, the harm which I have identified would not be outweighed by the public benefits derived from the proposed development and works.
21. The appeal scheme would fail to preserve the significance of 50 Cheap Street and the character and appearance of the Sherborne Conservation Area. It would therefore be contrary to Policies ENV4 and ENV12 of the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan¹ (LP), Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act, Section 12 and 16 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure that proposals are of a high quality of sustainable and inclusive design, but also conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance.

Other Matters

22. No concerns have been raised regarding the effect of the proposed development and works on the settings of nearby heritage assets, including the Grade II* listed building known as Abbeylands. There are no reasons for me to reach an alternative view.

Conclusion

23. Although Historic England may not have risen an objection to some aspects of the scheme, they nevertheless expressed concerns regarding the proposal on heritage grounds. In this particular instance, there are no considerations which indicate that the appeals should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons detailed above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

S Edwards

INSPECTOR

¹ Adopted October 2015.