



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2021

by L Wilson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/21/3278560

15A Stamford New Road, Altrincham WA14 1BN

- 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 Li-Hua Lu against the decision of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 101048/FUL/20, dated 14 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2021.
 - The development proposed was described as replacement of rotten timber bay and casement windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The names provided on the planning application and appeal forms differ. The appellant's agent has confirmed that the appellant's name was incorrectly completed on the appeal form and the appellant is Mrs Li-Hua Lu.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area, and linked to that, whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Stamford New Road Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site relates to a three-storey terraced building located within the CA. The ground floor is in retail use and the upper floors are been used for educational purposes. The building has a central timber oriel window at first and second floors which includes stained glazing, carved detailing and a tourelle with a wrought iron finial. There is a sliding sash window to each side of the oriel window at first and second floors. The oriel window is a key attractive, historic feature of the building's character and appearance which makes a positive contribution to the CA.
5. The CA is defined by the development of the Altrincham railway station and includes a cohesive group of good quality development in a variety of architectural styles and detailing, which contributes to a high-level of aesthetic value. This section of the CA is characterised by primarily commercial buildings

- which are generally three storey in height with greater architectural detailing to the upper floors.
6. The Stamford New Road Conservation Area Appraisal SPD5.4 (2014) identifies the host building as a positive contributor. The Stamford New Road Conservation Area Management Plan SPD5.4a (2016) sets out policies to manage future change to the CA. The policies seek to ensure that established architectural detailing and features should not be removed or replaced, unless on a like-for-like basis if poor condition requires it.
 7. The appellant seeks to replace the existing windows with like-for-like units. It is proposed that the window would be removed and recreated by a specialist carpenter and joiner. The ornate carvings and stained-glass panes would be retained where possible and reinstated as part of the new oriel window. Glazed units would be replaced with double glazed conservation windows.
 8. The evidence before me does not demonstrate that the oriel window is in such a poor condition that it is beyond repair. For example, a condition survey has not been submitted to understand the condition of the oriel window as well as elements which could be salvaged and repaired, the structural implications and the impact of any replacement fabric required. The submitted information¹ is limited in detail and does not demonstrate that its replacement is justified due to the condition of the oriel window.
 9. Furthermore, there is insufficient information to determine that the replacement oriel window would be satisfactorily designed, fabricated and installed. Having regard to the Council's Heritage Development Officer's consultation responses, it would be difficult to replicate the existing window. The submission does not clearly set out how historic features and elements would be retained. An inadequate replacement would harm the host building and its contribution it makes to the wider conservation area. Thus, it has not been demonstrated that the replacement window, which is an important feature, would be satisfactorily designed, fabricated and installed to not harm the host building or the CA. Accordingly, based on the evidence submitted, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
 10. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') states 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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Framework paragraph 200 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Where there is less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
 11. Given the nature of the proposal within the context of the CA as a whole, the level of harm would be less than substantial, nevertheless it is of considerable

¹ Including the Conservation Method Statement, Conservation Planning Statement, drawings and Structural Engineer's report

importance and weight. I have had regard to the benefits of the scheme including that it would improve the thermal and air quality of the building whilst reducing maintenance. This would improve the quality of the learning and teaching space provided to the local community.

12. Based on the evidence submitted, such benefits could be achieved through repairing the existing window. The public benefits associated with the scheme would be limited and would not justify or outweigh the harm to the CA that I have identified, as required by the Framework.
13. The appellant asserts that it is not economically viable to repair the existing windows. However, this has not been supported by any substantive information to demonstrate that this is the case.
14. For the reasons given above, the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area, and would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Consequently, the scheme would conflict with Policy R1 of the Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy (2012) which seeks, amongst other matters, to protect the historic environment. It would also conflict with the Framework which seeks to promote good design which protects and enhances the historic environment. In addition, it would conflict with policies within the SPD5.4a which seek to protect the preservation and enhancement of the CA's character, appearance and special architectural and historic interest.
15. The Council accepts that Policy R1 can only be given limited weight because it is not entirely consistent with the Framework and thus policies which are most important for determining this application are out-of-date. I see no reason to disagree. Having regard to paragraph 11 d i) and footnote 7 of the Framework, the harm to the designated heritage asset (CA), that I have identified above, provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.

Other Matters

16. I understand that a Grade II listed building (Stamford House) is located close to the appeal site. The Council raise no concerns in respect of the effect of the development on the setting of the listed building, and I have no substantive reason to consider otherwise. I am satisfied that the scheme would have a neutral effect on the heritage asset and would preserve the special interest of the listed building. This is due to the separation distance between the appeal site and the heritage asset, as well as the nature of the scheme. This is a neutral consideration and does not weigh in favour of the appeal.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other material considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

L M Wilson

INSPECTOR