



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2021

by R W Allen B.Sc PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 5TH January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/21/3277482

The Rupert Brooke Public House, 2 Broadway, Grantchester CB3 9NQ

- 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 Peter Romaniuk (Big Brown Dog Ltd) against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application ref S/3847/19/FL, dated 1 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is retrospective alteration of parking layout and construction of new garden and terrace area and installation of new signpost.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have used the Council's wording in its decision notice in the banner heading above, as I find it more accurately describes the nature of the works over that used in the application form. As the appellant has also drawn on the Council's wording in the appeal form, I am satisfied no party is prejudiced by me doing so.
3. While the planning application contained numerous elements, for the appeal I have concerned myself only with the matters of dispute between the parties, namely the terrace wall. I observed no obvious differences between the wall as built and the plans submitted for the appeal. I am therefore content to determine the appeal on both.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the terrace wall element of the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Grantchester Conservation Area having specific regard to its height, bonding, and mortar.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is the Rupert Brooke Public House. The terrace wall in question encloses an outdoor seating space located between the building's front entrance and its car park. The appellant states that its purpose is to provide a visual and noise screen and to create a pleasing space for its patrons to use.

6. For context, the appellant obtained planning permission¹ for the terrace wall as part of a number of alterations sought for the site. As it has transpired, the appellant did not build the wall in accordance with those plans. It is taller for one thing, and the appellant has used a different bonding style on the section of the wall which faces Broadway and where it turns the corner into the car park. Both of these are objectionable matters for the Council.
7. The appeal site sits within the Grantchester Conservation Area. The Council states² that its significance is defined by its architectural and historical merit comprising the quality of the buildings and the spaces between them, the landscape, trees and street furniture. I observed and appreciated this at my site visit, and I paid particular attention to the regular pattern of boundary treatments in the vicinity of the appeal site.
8. I have some sympathies with the appellant. The brick colour used for the wall in question, which I am told is likely Cambridge White, notably stands out rather than harmonises against the public house. I read from the Council's submissions, perhaps between the lines, that it appears to regret the choice of the brick sample used, and perhaps it ought to have conditioned approval of the materials before the development commenced. I also concur on the unattractiveness of the existing extension to the public house.
9. Having said that, neither of the above circumstances dissuades me from my findings on the terrace wall as built, and I concur with the Council that the wall is prominent for the wrong reasons; and is unattractive. The height of the wall, albeit not significantly taller than that approved by the Council, has resulted in a mid-height structure which fails to complement the established boundaries in the village. Being too tall to be read as a front garden boundary, and too short to be seen as a larger-height rear wall, the terrace wall is neither one thing nor the other. Instead, the wall appears incongruous and does not sit well within the character of the area.
10. Moreover, what is perhaps more notably uncharacteristic is the mixed use of bonding styles. I have no concerns with the Garden Wall style bonding used for the main parts of the wall. However, the abrupt change to an English bond style as the wall turns the corner into Broadway is anything but a seamless transition as the appellant suggests, indeed I find that the two styles jar in this instance. The appellant explains that the reason for the change was to assist in constructing the curve. I am not persuaded that this was the only solution to this perceived problem. Indeed, I observed a boundary wall being constructed on the opposite side of the road which equally had a curve, and where the bonding remained consistent.
11. But even if I were, the wall has been executed in a rather haphazard way comprising irregular brick spacing, which in turn has led to numerous, large and irregularly sized areas of mortar between the bricks which dominate the wall and appear unsightly and without finesse. Its prominence is accentuated by the standard brown sand mortar colour, which the Council says should have been light. Furthermore, I observed that the mortar has been inconsistently applied, being both surfaced and recessed against the brickwork. No evidence is before me to suggest that the construction of the wall in this way was deliberate to reflect the style of the area.

¹ Planning Reference S/1705/19/FL

² Grantchester Conservation Area Appraisal 1999

12. Taking the above into consideration, I find that the wall as built is an unattractive and unsympathetic addition to the area which is harmful to the setting of the Grantchester Conservation Area. It would not accord with Local Plan³ policy NH/14. This states that development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the district's historic environment and create high-quality environments and respond to local heritage character. In reaching this decision, I have discharged my duties under the 1990 Act⁴.
13. Paragraph 202 of the Framework⁵ states that where less than substantial harm is found to a heritage asset, as is the case here, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. The appellant is at pains to point out that the space created by the wall is a vast improvement to the bland parking spaces that existed there previously. While there are obvious benefits for the viability of the public house and its users through the creation of an outdoor seating area, I find that the harm caused by the wall's unattractiveness and prominence in the conservation area is sufficient to outweigh those benefits.

Other Matters

14. The Council has identified a number of Grade II listed buildings in the village, five of which sit either side of, and opposite the public house. I observed all these structures at my site visit and found them, for different reasons, to be charming and delightfully attractive properties. However, I am satisfied the location of the terraced wall is sufficiently distant and would not interrupt or distract views of the buildings from the street, or negatively affect how they are appreciated. I am satisfied that the significance of the listed buildings would be preserved. I have reached the same conclusion regarding other and more distant listed buildings in the locality. In reaching this decision, I have similarly discharged my statutory duties under the 1990 Act.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

R. Allen

INSPECTOR

³ South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

⁴ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

⁵ National Planning Policy Framework 2021