



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 7 December 2021

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/W/21/3273271

3A Market Place, Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire SL9 9EA

- 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 Raj Khanna against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - East Area (Chiltern).
 - The application Ref PL/20/3867/FA, dated 16 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'retrospective application for shop front, proposed window to side elevation and skylight ground floor flat roof'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have considered the appeal on the basis of the development shown on the submitted plans which, ostensibly aligns with alterations to the shop front that I saw at my visit have been carried out.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site includes a ground floor commercial unit within a parade which the Chalfont St Peter Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2028 (NP) identifies as part of the Primary Shopping Frontage of the Chalfont St Peter District Shopping area. Shop fronts in the parade are of varied designs, but features such as brick pilasters and corbels between units and stall risers are typical, and many include recessed entrances. Together with the consistent use of white render and timber boarding to the first-floor level and common front gables, this affords an attractive sense of overall coherence to the parade.
5. The appeal proposal includes a predominantly glazed shop front with an entrance door flush with the street frontage. The submitted plans indicate that the previous shop front included a recessed entrance, stall riser and glazing bars. The presence of these traditional features which are typical of other shop fronts nearby would have added to the visual interest and appearance of the host building, and reinforced the distinctive character of the parade. From the information before me, I see no reason to disagree with the assessment within the NP that the appeal building prior to the development made a positive architectural contribution to the area. In my judgement, this contribution is harmfully eroded by the loss of the traditional shop front features.

6. I acknowledge alterations to other shop fronts in the locality, and that some include large areas of glazing and/or non-recessed entrances. However, the majority retain pronounced stall risers, often in brick. Against these, the very low stall riser to the appeal property is incongruous, and additionally results in unsympathetically large expanses of glazing which I find relate poorly to the proportions and appearance of the host building. Moreover, the appeal unit is part of a run of buildings where I saw that stall risers increase gradually in height as land levels fall towards the junction of Church Lane with Market Place. This results in a fairly consistent alignment to the top of the stall risers in views along the street. The height of the stall riser to the appeal building sitting significantly below the top of those to the neighbours to either side stands out as a jarring interruption to this pattern.
7. Based on my observations at my visit, I am satisfied that the rooflight and side window which are proposed to the rear of the building would assimilate sympathetically with their surroundings, and I agree with the Council's assessment that these elements of the proposal would be acceptable.
8. Nevertheless, I find for the reasons above that the alterations to the shop front would be conspicuous and would detract considerably from the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Policies GC1 and S11 of the Chiltern District Local Plan 1997 Consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2011 and Policy VC6 of the NP. Together, these policies broadly seek high quality design that reflects and respects the character of the surrounding area and features which contribute to local distinctiveness, and require, amongst other things, a high standard of shop front design.

Other Matters

9. I note that representations submitted by interested parties in response to the appeal include comments raising concerns associated with use of part of the appeal building as a House in Multiple Occupation. However, that use is not part of the development that is before me to consider as part of this appeal.
10. That the Council did not receive objections from neighbouring occupiers in response to its consultation on the application is a neutral factor which weighs neither for nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

11. I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR