
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 January 2022

by C McDonagh BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/21/3273100

214 Chiswick High Road, Chiswick, London W4 1PD

- 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 Bonnie McKeivitt (Chelsea Fine Foods Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00248/214/P14, dated 21 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 30 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of single storey extension to the front of the building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During the course of the appeal, the revised National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (the Framework) was published. I consider that there have been no fundamental changes relevant to the main issue in this appeal and therefore no party will be prejudiced by my consideration of it.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, in particular the Chiswick High Road Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a ground floor commercial unit which is part of a five-storey building located on the corner of Chiswick High Road and Windmill Road. Although described as vacant, the unit has operated most recently as a café which has an outdoor seating area under a canopy. The site is set back from both Chiswick High Road and Windmill Road and the host building is located in a gap in the frontage of the shopping and retail frontage.
5. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. The Framework sets out at paragraph 193 that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to that asset's conservation.

6. The CA Appraisal advises that the significance of the CA derives from its historic development, primarily linked to retail activity, and generally well-preserved buildings and architectural detailing. Today, the buildings that line the High Road are predominantly three storeys, while the tree lined street and wide pavements give a pleasant pedestrian environment despite the busy road. Furthermore, there is a strong, consistent plot width and rhythm throughout the conservation area. Brick is the dominant building material, with stucco dressing and detailing to many of the frontages above ground floor level.
7. Alongside these characteristics, the appraisal identifies a number of modern infill buildings which make either a neutral or a negative contribution to the area. This includes the 'five storey block on the corner with Windmill Lane' - the host building. The appraisal goes on to state 'this building is not only out of scale but also breaks the established building line of Chiswick High Road.'
8. Due to its size, the proposed extension would add substantial mass to the front of the host building. This building is identified as breaking the building line of the High Road frontage. The new structure would draw attention to this negative characteristic, regardless of the lightweight appearance of glass. This would be compounded by its prominent location and the use of modern materials, such as powder coated aluminium. These would jar with the traditional materials and detailing displayed by the majority of the buildings in the area. Although there are other examples of outdoor seating on the street, this is generally under traditional style awnings rather than large, glazed extensions. Taken together, these factors would harm the significance of the CA.
9. In accordance with the guidance contained within the Framework, the harm would be less than substantial. Paragraph 202 requires the decision maker to weigh this harm against the public benefits of the proposal.
10. Although it is argued the existing terrace area is in poor condition, from my observations on the site visit this did not appear to be immediately apparent, nor are there specific issues brought to my attention. Moreover, although it is claimed the extension would increase the commercial viability of any subsequent host business, such as a café or restaurant, there is nothing substantive before me as to how this would occur, such as the claimed increase in footfall. As such, the public benefits required to outweigh the harm have not been demonstrated.
11. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposed development would fail to preserve the significance of the CA. The public benefits would not outweigh the harm that I have identified. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies CC1, CC2 and CC4 of the Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 (LP) (adopted September 2015). Together these require, among other things, recognition of the context of the area's character, support high quality design and conserve heritage assets.

Other Matters

12. The local area evidently includes several statutorily and locally Listed Buildings. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires the decision maker to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the setting of a Listed Building.

13. I note the appellant has assessed potential impacts of the proposal on these buildings in their heritage assessment, although the Council has not concluded there would be harm. Based on all that I have seen and read, I see no reason to come to a different conclusion and the proposal would therefore preserve the significance and special interest of the listed buildings in accordance with the Act.

Conclusion

14. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, particularly the significance of the CA. Although I have taken into account the public benefits of the scheme as presented by the appellant, I have concluded these would not outweigh the harm. As such, there are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C McDonagh

INSPECTOR