

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 February 2022

by David Spencer BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28th February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/W/21/3281334

19 Upper Grange Road, Beccles NR34 9NU

- 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 Bruce Ingram against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref DC/21/2137/FUL, dated 29 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 30 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is a replacement front door.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the description of the proposal from the Local Planning Authority's decision notice, which I consider more accurately describes what was applied for.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed replacement door on the character and appearance of No.19 Upper Grange Road, a non-designated heritage asset, and more widely whether the appeal proposal would enhance the appearance of the Beccles Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. No.19 Upper Grange Road forms part of a small collection of houses of the 'Arts and Crafts' style of architecture which also comprises Nos.9-17 Upper Grange Road. These dwellings represent a distinctive form and aesthetic of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, preserving a noteworthy phase in the history of the built environment of Beccles. Amongst the key characteristics of 'Arts and Crafts' architecture which lend these buildings, including No.19, their intrinsic character and charm are as follows: the clarity of the form of the buildings; the materials used; and the quality of construction and craftsmanship. These attributes remain intact at No.19 giving the building its heritage value and as such it is identified in the Beccles Conservation Area (BCA) Character Appraisal as a locally listed building.
5. There is a particular clarity to the form and appearance of No.19, including a centrally positioned front door within two proportioned bays of the building. In contrast to other nearby 'Arts and Craft' dwellings, the front door at No.19 faces onto the highway such that it is a prominent feature in this part of the BCA. The characteristic craftsmanship of the 'Arts and Crafts' style is reinforced

by the particular quality and detailing of the wooden front door including sophisticated mouldings, particularly to the elliptical eight-paned glazing at the top of the door, the stained glasswork more generally and detailed panelling. The door is set within a proportioned brickwork portico surround, emphasising the door as a key feature of the front elevation. Accordingly, the quality, detailing and traditional materials of the front door to No.19 make an integral contribution to the character and appearance of the building and a positive contribution to the wider appearance of the BCA.

6. The appeal proposal would replace the front door with a modern, composite door comprising of two solid bottom panels and two glazed panels. Overall, it would be of a generally simpler appearance that would not reflect the quality of craftsmanship and materials of the existing door, attributes which are integral to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the host building. Consequently, the proposed door would be harmful to the character and appearance of No.19 and to the appearance of the BCA more generally.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed by existing and future generations. The NPPF also advises that any harm to a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. In respect of the appearance of the BCA the harm would be less than substantial, noting that various buildings in the vicinity have replacement front doors, including styles and materials comparable to that proposed here. However, an Article 4 direction has been enacted to manage the potential cumulative effects of minor but important changes that would affect the appearance of the BCA. Some of the changes to the doors of nearby dwellings may well have predated the start of the Article 4 direction. As such, they should not necessarily set the pattern for future development in the BCA, including within the small group of 'Arts and Crafts' style dwellings containing No.19, where attention to craftsmanship is a particular quality to be preserved, wherever possible.
8. The appellant submits that the existing door is in poor condition, inefficient in excluding drafts and a security risk. There is, however, little to substantiate this. From my own external inspection from the adjacent public highway the door would appear to be in a reasonable condition. Nor is there sufficient explanation as to why the existing door cannot be repaired to remedy the appellant's concerns. As such, there is not the clear and convincing justification for the harm to the appearance of the BCA that would arise. Similarly, in applying a balanced judgement on the scale of harm to the significance of No.19 as a non-designated heritage asset the loss of an integral feature to the heritage value of the 'Arts and Crafts' style dwelling would not be outweighed by the convenience and cost of a modern replacement front door of a lower quality and detailing.
9. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of No.19 Upper Grange Road as a non-designated heritage asset. Similarly, it would also fail to enhance the appearance of the Beccles Conservation Area, including the aims sought by the imposition of the Article 4 Direction. Consequently, the appeal proposal would be contrary to Policies WLP8.37 and WLP8.38 of the East Suffolk Council Waveney Local Plan 2019 and Policy BECC5 of the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan 2021 in respect of the identified harm to the historic environment and to the fabric of a non-

designated heritage asset respectively. Specifically, the proposal would be contrary to Policy WLP8.39 of the Local Plan which requires replacement doors in Conservation Areas (where Article 4 Directions apply) to be of a suitable design and constructed in appropriate materials, taking account of the prominence of the location and the architectural value of both the building and the feature to be replaced. In design terms, there would also be a conflict with Policy WLP8.29 of the Local Plan which requires all proposals to demonstrate a clear understanding of the form and character of the historic environment and to respond to local context, including the use of materials and detailing appropriate to the local vernacular. The proposal would also fail to accord with the Council's Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document 2021 which encourages the repair and retention of traditional doors and resists modern replacements that would fail to preserve heritage assets. The proposal would also fail to accord with the objectives for conserving and enhancing the historic environment in the NPPF, in particular at paragraphs 200, 202 and 203.

10. I have taken into account all other matters raised, but there is nothing that leads me to conclude other than the appeal be dismissed for the reasons given.

David Spencer

Inspector.