



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2022

by P D Sedgwick BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/21/3282021

6 Easton Street, High Wycombe, HP11 1NJ

- 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 S Jadhav - JCHO Development Ltd against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 21/06562/FUL, dated 17 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 16 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "Retention of AOV (fire safety and ventilation) window to the side elevation."
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for AOV (fire safety and ventilation) window to the side elevation at 6 Easton Street, High Wycombe, HP11 1NJ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/06562/FUL, dated 17 May 2021, and the plans submitted with it.

Preliminary Matter

2. I note that the application has been submitted retrospectively. I have dealt with the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the building which is a non-designated heritage asset and the wider High Wycombe Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is within High Wycombe Conservation Area (CA) on the north side of Easton Street which runs through the town centre linking the High Street to the west with the A40 to the east. The host building is close to a crossroad junction with the A404 which runs north to south between the High Street and Easton Street. It is at the end of a row of five buildings between the junction and the Union Baptist Church, which forms a break in the street frontage where it sits behind a raised lawn. The church's set back position exposes the side of the appeal property to views from the street when approaching the building from the east.
5. The CA has a varied character and appearance reflecting the different age of buildings which range from the 17th to 20th Century. The row in which the host property sits reflects that age range. The building at the junction is a 1930's

brick-built parade with shops on the ground floor. Nos 3, 4 and 5, between the parade and the host building, are grade II listed 2 storey buildings which vary in age, height, width, window design and materials. Nos 3 and 5 are red brick. No 4's frontage is whitewashed plaster with some exposed timber frame on the gable end above the eaves.

6. Although the Council has not described the reasons for the host property being locally listed, the most distinctive feature is its Art Deco glazed tiled frontage. It includes a tiled fascia incorporating the former business name and decorative tiles above the first floor window lintels, and to the sides of the arched entrance to a rear courtyard. Matching sash windows on the ground and first floor of the front elevation also contribute to the building's character and appearance, as do three roof dormers although they are a more recent addition. The dormer window designs do not reflect those of the ground and first floor, although according to the Council they are unauthorised. The gable end provides some limited interest to the side elevation with its relatively steeply pitched roof, twin sashed windows and features above them. The rear wing behind, and stepped down from, the gable end, whilst visible from the street travelling west, has little of interest aside from a sash window and does not contribute to the significance of the building.
7. The window subject of this appeal is on the side of the rear wing where it meets the main building just below the eaves. It sits between the sash windows on the gable end and the sash window on the rear wing. It is single paned and square with a higher cill than the sash windows and thus lacks their vertical emphasis. According to the appellant its position and height is necessary to enable smoke to vent properly from the building in the event of a fire. Whilst the window differs in design, it is relatively small and seen in the context of a roof light above and to the side of it, and windows on the opposite side wall at the end of Nos 8 to 11, a row of grade II listed houses. The windows on that wall are also modern and functional and do not reflect the design of windows on the front elevation of the houses. Furthermore, attention is drawn away from the side elevation of the appeal property, and houses opposite it, by the Union Baptist Church, which is an imposing classical building, and by the open space in front of it.
8. Windows can contribute significantly to a building's character and in identifying its history, as the Council suggest. However, in the case of the appeal building its character derives from the mix of elements on its front elevation reflecting different historical eras. The 20th century additions of dormers and glazed tiles contribute as much to the building's character as the ornate designed Edwardian windows described by the Council. The addition of the AOV window did not lead to the loss of an original window which the Council rightly stress should be avoided, in order to preserve the character of the CA. Overall, because of its position and size I do not consider that the window harms the character and appearance of the building, or the features important in contributing to its historical significance. It follows that it has not caused harm to the character or appearance of the CA. The development does not therefore conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) and Policies CP11 and DM31 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (2019) which require development to conserve the significance, special interest, character, and appearance of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, it is concluded that the appeal should be allowed. The Council has not requested that any planning conditions be imposed as the proposal is retrospective, and I have therefore allowed the appeal on the basis of the submitted plans.

P D Sedgwick

INSPECTOR