



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 March 2022

by Alison Fish BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D0121/W/21/3283205

Imperial Hotel, 14 South Parade, Weston-Super-Mare BS23 1JN

- 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 C. Sanders against the decision of North Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 20/P/2889/FUL, dated 23 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of timber sash windows with UPVC sash windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the replacement of timber sash windows with UPVC sash windows at Imperial Hotel, 14 South Parade, Weston-Super-Mare BS23 1JN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/P/2889/FUL, dated 23 November 2020, and the plans submitted with it.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal relates to the principal elevation of the property only and all of the replacement windows forming the appeal proposal had already been installed within the building at the time of my site visit.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to the host building, the Great Western Conservation Area and the setting of neighbouring listed buildings.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within the Greater Weston Conservation Area (CA) and a Heritage Action Zone. More specifically, the site is located within the Town Centre character area as defined in the Great Weston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan adopted December 2018 (CAMP). The CAMP describes this location (within the sub-area of High Street) as 'having buildings of different styles, sizes and materials but which share a common frontage at the pavement edge' with little character of any note at shopfront level but a 'miscellany of interesting buildings of various periods and styles' above fascia level. This concurs with my own assessment of the area.
5. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 requires that I pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

6. The appeal site itself comprises a three storey, stone and render property set within a terrace of buildings with commercial premises at street level and two floors of accommodation above. There are a total of eleven openings on the front elevation such that there is a high ratio of window openings to solid wall and a symmetry which, together with features such as detailing around the windows and bay windows at first floor level, gives the building a rather elegant appearance.
7. The window openings themselves vary in size and design with the largest openings at ground floor and the smallest windows in the top floor. The ground floor and first floor windows are divided horizontally and vertically by a single glazing bar whilst the top floor windows are further divided appearing as 8-over-8 panes. From the submitted information I understand that the original windows were vertical sliding sash windows with 'horn' detailing.
8. The CAMP indicates that the loss of historic detailing and the installation of inappropriate replacement windows is having a negative impact. The appellant has provided photographs indicating the state of repair of the original windows and I understand that the appellant has repaired windows where possible. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I accept the appellant's argument that replacement windows were necessary as the original windows were beyond economic repair and therefore there would be an inevitable and unavoidable loss of historic fabric to the building through the removal of these windows.
9. I acknowledge that in many cases the use of UPVC as opposed to timber can be harmful to the overall appearance of an individual building and the wider CA. From my own assessment of the CA I found many examples close to the appeal site of inappropriate UPVC replacement windows where the design, style of opening and thickness of the frames detracted from the character of the building and the wider area.
10. That said, the replacement windows have sought to replicate the style and design of the original windows, being sliding sash with horns and replicating the subdivisions in the window panes. The Council acknowledge the appellants attempts to replicate the window style but say that the difference in appearance is evident and harmful. However, from street level, the smooth finish of the UPVC referred to by the Council, as opposed to the grain finish associated with painted timber is not evident.
11. Moreover, the slim profile of the frames and the attempts made to replicate the original detailing of the windows means that it is very difficult to differentiate between the original windows and those which have been replaced, resulting in a development which in this instance, does not detract from or harm the character and appearance of the building. To that end, the replacement windows do not adversely affect one's appreciation of the building or the wider context of the CA.
12. In addition to the above, the appeal building is attached to a Grade II listed building. 16-18 South Parade is a former bank dating from the 1860's and occupies a prominent corner location at the end of the terrace and constructed of stone with an Italianate design. Its significance is derived from its historic origins, prominent location, symmetry and detailing.
13. The Council have also drawn my attention to The Royal Hotel which is also a Grade II listed building of Italianate design. This occupies a prominent position

on the opposite corner of South Parade displaying many of the architectural details found on 16-18 South Parade. It follows therefore that the close association of these two buildings means that the appeal site is located within the setting of both of these listed buildings. As such, section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that I have special regard to the desirability of preserving the buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

14. I accept that UPVC windows in many instances would be inappropriate on buildings within the setting of a listed building. However, the careful detailing of the replacement windows means that in this instance they are largely undiscernible, and do not affect how the two listed buildings are appreciated. With that in mind, in my view the proposal has a neutral effect on the setting of these listed buildings.
15. For the above reasons the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area or the host building and would preserve the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of the neighbouring listed buildings. The proposal would therefore accord Policies CS5 and CS12 of the North Somerset Council Core Strategy adopted January 2017 and Policies DM3, DM4 and DM32 of the North Somerset Council Development Management Policies Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 adopted July 2016 which amongst other matters seek high quality design and which conserves the historic environment and prevents harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the special interest of listed buildings including their setting.

Conditions

16. Given that the replacement windows have already been installed on the appeal building, and in the absence of any suggested conditions being put forward by the Council, I do not propose to attach any conditions.

Conclusion

17. Taking all matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

Alison Fish

INSPECTOR