
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 May 2022

by G Pannell BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/W/21/3285421
40 Old Road West, GRAVESEND, DA11 0LJ

- 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 Stephen Medes against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20210464, dated 4 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 29 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is new shop front and access to enable self-containment of the upper floor flat.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The new shop front is already in place. The reference to the proposal being retrospective is superfluous and I have left it out of my decision.
3. Following the Council's decision, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised on 20 July 2021. The Council and appellant have had an opportunity to comment on the implications of these changes through their submissions

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The site comprises a retail unit which is located on the junction of Old West Road and Wrotham Road. The building is three storeys, with retail units on the ground floor and residential accommodation above. The two adjoining units are occupied by a pharmacy and the appeal site is operated as a retail and wholesale butchers. However, the general character of this part of Old West Road is residential.
6. The evidence before me indicates that the previous shop front was an aluminium frame with timber inserts and minimal glazing. The appeal seeks to retain the replacement UPVC shopfront, which also provides a separate access to the upper floor flat.

7. As the neighbouring two units are occupied by the same business, there is a consistency to the design and appearance of the adjacent shop fronts with the use of the same blue colour to the exterior, which contrasts starkly with the white colour of the shopfront of the appeal site. The scale and proportions of the glazing bars are also indicative that the neighbouring shopfront is of a more traditional design and appearance.
8. Policy TC9 of the Gravesham Local Plan, Saved and Deleted Policies Version 2014 (LP) seeks to resist development that would result in existing shopfronts of traditional design and materials being lost. The parties agree that the original shop front had been lost at some time previously and therefore the appeal before me is not seeking to replace a shopfront of traditional materials. However, the previous shop front did retain elements of the original design, with the door set back from the main shop front and retained the narrow proportions of the original bay window and therefore the policy would be relevant.
9. The detailed design of the replacement shopfront and its use of chunky glazing bars and white UPVC results in demonstrable harm to the appearance of the host building. Whilst I accept that the appeal property is not located within a town centre or within a Conservation Area, the appeal scheme fails to recognise the character and appearance of the original building as a whole, which is still evident within the remainder of the terrace and as a result is detrimental to the wider area.
10. The replacement shop front with its chunkier glazing and flush appearance detracts from the appearance of the building as a whole and has failed to take the opportunity to enhance the built environment as set out within Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 (CS) which requires new development to be visually attractive, enhancing the local built environment and integrating with the surrounding local area. This is aligned with the principles of chapter 12 of the Framework.
11. In conclusion, the replacement shopfront is contrary to saved policy T9 of the LP and policy CS19 of the CS for the reasons outlined above.

Other Matters

12. I have had regard to the appellants concerns about fire safety and the need for a separate entrance to the residential accommodation. However I am not persuaded that the proposal before me is the only means of achieving the same improvements to fire safety and an independent access for the upper floor flat. Therefore, I have given this argument limited weight.

Conclusion

13. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Pannell

INSPECTOR