



Appeal Decision

Site visit carried out on 7 June 2022

by Mrs J A Vyse DipTP Dip PBM MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/Y/21/3285481

28 Sheaf Street, Daventry NN11 4AB

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Alistair Keech against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application No WND/2021/0140, dated 6 May 2021, was refused by a notice dated 25 August 2021.
 - The works comprise repainting/decorate shop frontage, repaint hanging signs to front and rear of building.
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Decision

1. For the reasons that follow, the appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the repainting/decoration of the shop front, including the fascia signage.
2. I allow the appeal however, insofar as it relates to the remainder of the scheme and listed building consent is therefore granted for repainting of the hanging signs to the front and rear of 28 Sheaf Street, Daventry, in accordance with the terms of the application No WND/2021/0140, dated 6 May 2021, and the plans submitted with it, but only insofar as they relate to the hanging signs. No consent is granted or implied for the other works shown on those plans.

Procedural Matters

3. The description of works is taken from the Council's Decision Notice. It is a more concise description than that used on the application form and more accurately reflects the nature of the proposals. The works have already been carried out.
4. The appeal property comprises a listed building located within a conservation area. I have, therefore, had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this case relate to the effect of the works on the special architectural or historic interest of the grade II listed premises and the extent to which they would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Daventry Town Centre Conservation Area.

Reasons

6. As noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan,¹ Daventry Conservation Area is characterised by the continuous built up frontage of high

¹ Adopted December 2017

quality, high density buildings along its main streets, including Sheaf Street, with extensive evidence of the burgage plot formations of medieval buildings behind Georgian and Victorian facades. The Conservation Area is divided into character areas. Character Area 3, Sheaf Street, Brook Street and Tavern Lane, is contained within the historic core of the town. Sheaf Street and Brook Street have a mixed commercial and residential use. Area 3 has a more vernacular architectural and spatial character than other parts. Whilst the tight urban grain is consistent with the rest of the historic town, the sense of enclosure is far more significant along Sheaf Street, due to the narrower highway, projecting features and other architectural detailing. Among other things, the traditional shopfronts enrich the grand architectural styling of High Street and Sheaf Street, playing an integral role in defining the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, contributing to its heritage significance.

7. The grade II listed appeal property, which dates from the late 18th/early 19th Century, comprises three storeys beneath a Welsh slate roof. Symmetrical pairs of sash windows are set at first and second floor level within the front façade. The building, which forms part of a continuous building frontage along Sheaf Lane (now a pedestrianised street) is finished with white stucco to the front, with plain red brick to the rear. It is listed for its group value. I saw that although the street frontages here, including the appeal property, have been altered, they retain a general simplicity, with the shopfront windows acting as a reminder of the historical development of the buildings without detracting from the original composition, contributing to their special interest.
8. The premises were converted to a bakery in around 2018, at which time consent was also granted for the installation of a new timber shop front. More recently, the premises changed hands but are still in use as an artisan bakery. The new owners have re-branded and redecorated the shop front and signage.
9. Dealing firstly with the hanging signs (one to the front above the fascia and one to the rear above first floor timber loading doors). The works comprised repainting of the previous signage in a new black and white livery with a matt finish. The Council takes no issue with this element of the scheme and I have no reason to disagree. The design is simple and I find no harm in this regard to the special interest of the listed building, to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or to the heritage significance of either asset.
10. Moving on to the shopfront, the rebranding has not altered any of the previously approved openings and the works have not resulted in the loss of any historic fabric or features. However, the shop front has been repainted in a very modern, angular design which slices diagonally across the frontage, with the design extending up into the fascia. One half is black, the other white. In addition, two full height vertically slatted panels have been added, each with a blackboard set within.
11. The diagonal monochrome design cuts across the traditional, vertical emphasis and architectural rhythm of the shopfront created by the pilasters, door and window openings across the shop frontage and is seen at jarring odds with the balanced, symmetrical appearance of the upper floors. Although the slatted timber panels do have a vertical emphasis, they are unrefined, almost utilitarian features that cut across elements of the shopfront detailing, obscuring them. I recognise that the detailing is not historic, but it is an

integral part of the overall design, respecting and reflecting elements of traditional shopfront design.

12. Slicing across the frontage as it does, the design does not respect the architecture or traditional appearance of the building. Rather, it disrupts the previously balanced appearance across the shopfront. Consequently, the scheme affects adversely the traditional integrity of the appeal building, materially harming its special interest. For the same reason, it does not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and harms the heritage significance of both assets.
13. The Council also takes issue with the fascia sign, suggesting that it has been installed over the previously existing timber fascia. The sign is made of Di bond, an aluminium composite sheet with a matt, brushed finish, with the appellant confirming, supported by written evidence from the contractor, that he simply replaced a pre-existing Di bond fascia panel on a like for like replacement but in a different livery.
14. There is very little evidence before me as to the detail of what signage was consented back in 2018. It would seem that a condition on the listed building consent required scaled joinery drawings and sections showing construction and design details for the new shop front and full details of the exact colour, finish and proposed manner of fixing of all the signage. However, I have no information as to what was actually approved pursuant to that condition and so no way of knowing whether the previous Di bond fascia was installed lawfully. I am mindful though, that the Conservation Area Appraisal, which was adopted prior to determination of the 2018 application, confirms that timber fascias are integral to the character of the shopfronts. Similarly, the Council's, albeit undated, Shopfronts Design Guide SPG promotes wooden fascias. Neither allows for aluminium fascias.
15. The use of an aluminium fascia is a wholly inappropriate material that is incongruous on this listed building, harming its special interest. There is harm too to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in this regard, with consequent harm to the heritage significance of both assets.
16. I consider the harm that I have identified to both the listed building and the Conservation Area would, in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) be less than substantial, towards the lower end of that range, in both instances. That harm is, nevertheless, to be given considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes securing of optimal viable use of listed buildings.
17. A petition of support for the works was submitted, with some 235 signatories. The works also have the support of a local Councillor. I have no doubt in this regard, that the service provided by the bakery is very much welcomed by the local community. However, as the Council observes, the precise nature of the shopfront design and fascia signage is not critical to the viability of the business. In this case, I find no public benefits that would outweigh the harm that I have identified as a consequence of the shopfront and fascia sign. That brings the scheme in to conflict with policy ENV7 of the Council's Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) (February 2020) and policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) ((December 2014) insofar as they have relevance as a material consideration in this case.

Together and among other things, those policies seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. There would be conflict too with the relevant sections of the Framework.

Conclusion

18. I find no harm in relation to the two hanging signs (one to the front and one to the rear) and conclude that the appeal should succeed in this regard. As the application is retrospective, no conditions are required.
19. I have, however, found that the identified harm in relation to the remainder of the appeal scheme, namely the shopfront and fascia signage, is not outweighed by public benefits in this case. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal does not succeed in this regard.

Jennifer A Vyse
INSPECTOR