

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 July 2022

by M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/G0908/W/22/3293949

Grapes Hotel, Market Square, Aspatia CA7 3HB

- 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 Urim Ismajlgeci against the decision of Allerdale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref FUL/2022/0013, dated 13 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 16 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the retention of external renderings following the part implementation of planning approval FUL/2020/0015.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the development has been carried out, retrospective planning permission has been sought. I am aware that the appeal site is the subject of an Enforcement Notice. This has no bearing on the consideration of the s78 appeal before me, and my decision would not prejudice the Council from taking any future action against the enforcement notice.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the building and the wider area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site relates to a former public house occupying a prominent position on West Street (A596) the main road through Aspatia, close to the junction with the Outgang Road (B5301). The area is mixed in character with dwellings juxtaposed with commercial enterprises and buildings of different scales, styles and ages, providing evidence of how the town has developed over the years.
5. The site consists of a 3 storey building with a lower 2 storey projection to the side and front, now converted into 6 flats following planning approval FUL/2020/0015. In the implementation of this permission, additional works were carried out to the 2 storey building including external boarding and rendering and the rearrangement of fenestration.
6. Whilst not a listed building or located within a conservation area, the photograph of the building prior to the rendering works indicates it was of some architectural merit, constructed of red sandstone that is locally distinct. The stonework was random but brought to courses with stone quoins to the building corners and cart door style opening, along with stone window surrounds. The building cannot therefore be said to be poor quality. I am clear that it had historical and evidential value as a vernacular building that

contributed positively to the character of the area. The presence of the Yates' Gym building opposite, although of a more polite form of architecture with lancet windows, decorative string course and clock tower, does not diminish the contribution that the appeal building makes to the variety of the street scene.

7. The stonework has been entirely covered over by the render, with the stone window cills being replaced by plastic versions. The render has resulted in a radical change to the appearance of the building with the rich colour, texture and features of the stonework now lost from view. This has produced a bland and nondescript building that does not enhance the street scene.
8. There is no evidence before me that the render has increased the thermal properties of the building, or that it is more low maintenance than the original stonework. Likewise, I have no evidence that the stonework was damaged, discoloured or in poor condition. Even if it was, there are alternative ways that the stonework could be repaired, repointed and cleaned. There is no information before me to demonstrate that it would be uneconomical to carry out such repair works.
9. Reference is made to the fallback position of painting the building in a light colour to match the 3 storey building, without planning permission. Be that as it may, the texture and pattern of the original stonework would still be evident, important qualities of the original building. As I am not convinced that the stonework is in a damaged condition, I do not find the painting of the building to be a realistic prospect. There would be no benefit in doing so, given it would require ongoing maintenance.
10. I saw that there are a variety of buildings in the wider area which have light coloured renders to their road facing elevations. Nevertheless, it is the covering up of the traditional stonework and architectural features of the building that is harmful. I am not convinced that materials for every building need to slavishly copy their neighbours or indeed, the external appearance of the remainder of the now combined buildings. Thus, the existence of a diverse street scene including other rendered buildings, carries little weight in my decision.
11. The external boarding and rendered finish is visually harmful to the character and appearance of the building and the wider area. As such, it fails to accord with Policies S4 and DM15 of the Allerdale Local Plan (Part 1); Strategic and Development Management Policies (2014) which amongst other things, seek to ensure new development responds positively to the character, history and distinctiveness of its location, and that materials do not adversely alter the appearance of the existing building. It also fails to accord with paragraphs 130, 134 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek to ensure good design and that such design, is maintained in the implementation of a permitted scheme.

Other Matters

12. The appeal site is opposite the Grade II listed Sir Wilfrid Lawson memorial consisting of a bronze figure of St George and the dragon, on a sandstone base with bronze plaques and drinking bowls. Its high aesthetic quality and craftsmanship contributes positively to its significance. The Council do not object to the development on the basis of any harm to the setting of the listed building and I am inclined to agree. Although the appeal site can be seen in the same views as the memorial, it does not have a functional or historical relationship with the listed building and is visually separated by the highly

trafficked main road. The setting of the listed building would therefore be preserved.

13. The lack of objections from interested parties is a neutral factor that weighs neither for, nor against, allowing the appeal.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, having regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

M Clowes

INSPECTOR