



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 July 2022

by G Bayliss BA (Hons) MA MA MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/W/22/3291078

64 Boundary Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 4DH

- 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 Lars Johnson against the decision of St Albans City and District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/2021/2496, dated 11 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 11 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as "Replacing single glazed glass unit to double glazed upvc double glazing unit with openers and frosted glass leaving original wooden frames and not changing appearance using upvc. Replacing rotten door using upvc."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area and its effect on the building's status as a locally listed building.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is prominently sited on the junction of Boundary Road and Walton Street. It is within a residential area characterised by a network of late Victorian and Edwardian red brick terraces with a high degree of visible coherence. The property is a former shop which has been sensitively converted to a dwelling, retaining the period shopfront which wraps around the corner of the property facing both Boundary Road and Walton Street.
4. It lies within the "Boundary Road Cottages Character Area" of the St Albans Conservation Area. The Character Appraisal highlights the importance of shops and commercial properties on street corners in this area which are part of its historic character. It notes on page 343 that the appeal building is a good example of how shops can be converted to residential use. The map accompanying this character area also identifies the appeal property as a Locally Listed Building. As such, the building is appropriately identified as a non-designated heritage asset and accords with the Planning Practice Guidance 'Historic Environment' (2019). In all, the appeal property is a focal point in the area making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Individually, the building also has heritage significance derived from its well preserved period shopfront, despite the change of use, reflecting the building's historic function.

5. In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. A matter of considerable importance and weight. Additionally, as a recognised non-designated heritage asset, the effect on its significance should be taken into account in determining an application.
6. The shopfront is of traditional construction incorporating the recognisable elements of a shopfront fascia with decorative cornice at the upper edge, and pilasters to either side, a brick stallriser and finely moulded glazing bars which subdivide the shop window. The vertical glazing bars are flush with the window frame but the horizontal glazing bars project, finishing slightly proud and extending onto the pilasters at the side. This decorative window framing adds quality and interest to the window construction.
7. It is proposed to retain the traditional painted timber surround but replace the painted timber framing of the inner shop windows with UPVC framing to accommodate double glazed frosted units in place of the existing clear single glazing. The existing and proposed elevations show that the overall design of the shop windows would be retained but there would be inner framing and opening lights inserted.
8. No detailed sections have been submitted to show the existing and proposed window framing and its profiling, and there are no details of the opening lights. Nor are there details of how the replacement UPVC windows would integrate with the retained timber shopfront surround or details of the finish of the UPVC to confirm that it would accurately replicate the painted wooden finish.
9. Based on these limited details, the drawings indicate that the framing sections would become more bulky and heavier which would significantly alter its appearance. Also, it is not possible to determine whether the replacement windows would replicate the fine decorative detailing of the glazing bars or replicate its finish, features which are so important to the significance of the shopfront. The proposal would therefore cause harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and to the significance of the locally listed building.
10. The appellant raises concerns regarding the single glazing including safety to the occupants and the public because of the risk of breakage, noise transmission and lack of thermal efficiency which is adding to the cost of heating. The appellant also states that they are also experiencing condensation on the glass, causing damp, mould and raising health concerns. Additionally, the existing windows are non-opening so introducing ventilation would no doubt improve the occupant's living conditions.
11. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the appeal proposal is the only way of addressing these concerns which may more sensitively address these issues.
12. I recognise that several other buildings have UPVC fenestration in the vicinity, including the property upstairs which was granted planning permission for replacement windows. I have also viewed the other developments in the area which have incorporated UPVC fenestration. However, I have highlighted the landmark prominence of this corner property and the quality of its shopfront, and the contribution that this and the building make to the historic character of

the area. I have also raised the lack of detail submitted to demonstrate how the appeal proposal would impact on the period shopfront and the harm that the alteration would most likely cause.

13. At 62 Boundary Road the building does not have the same degree of prominence, nor does it contain a period shopfront. I have also viewed the shop front alterations at 2 Sandridge Road and 1 Sandpit Lane. However, this shopfront is not comparable to the appeal before me. It does not have the same traditional elements that I have outlined, it did not have the same finely moulded shop window glazing bars and the main window sections do not appear to have become any more bulky.
14. In summary, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and have a harmful effect on the significance of the Locally Listed Building which is a non-designated heritage asset.
15. In accordance with Paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) 2021, the proposal would have a negative effect on the significance of a designated heritage asset and would result in "less than substantial" harm. This requires that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. I acknowledge that measures to improve energy efficiency in buildings could be regarded as a public benefit but there is no evidence that this could not be achieved in other less visually harmful ways. This benefit, therefore, only carries minimal weight. No other public benefits weigh against this harm and accordingly, there would be little public benefit to offset the identified harm which carries considerable importance and weight.
16. Overall, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area and it would have a harmful effect on the significance of the Locally Listed Building. It would be contrary to Policies 69, 85 and 87 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994. These policies are broadly consistent with the Framework and consequently full weight is attached to them. These policies require development to be of a high standard of design which is sympathetic to its surroundings, retains features of historic interest and utilises good quality materials which are normally traditional and natural. Policy 72 was also listed in the Council's Decision Notice, but I have excluded this as it is not relevant to the appeal. The appeal proposal would also be contrary with the Framework which requires heritage assets be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Other Matters

17. The appellant raises concerns over the conduct of the Council during the application process and a lack of consistency in making planning decisions and having clearly defined guidelines. Such concerns should normally be addressed through the Council's own complaints service in the first instance as these points are not related to the merits of the appeal before me.
18. I recognise that there were no neighbour objections to the proposal, but this is not in itself a reason to allow the development.

Conclusion

19. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to decide

otherwise. For these reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Bayliss

INSPECTOR