



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 October 2022

by Rachel Hall BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C3240/W/22/3299458

5 Market Square, Wellington, Telford TF1 1BP

- 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 S Rafique of Caprinos Pizza against the decision of Telford and Wrekin Council.
 - The application Ref TWC/2021/1182, dated 9 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 2 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is installation of new replacement shop frontage and signage - retrospective.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal relates to installation of a shop frontage which appears to have been completed. Therefore I am considering this appeal retrospectively. A separate application for advertisement consent was submitted for signage (Ref TWC/2021/1183).

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the appeal scheme preserves or enhances the character or appearance of Wellington Conservation Area, and whether it harms the setting of the nearby grade II listed buildings and a building of local interest.

Reasons

4. Wellington Conservation Area (the Conservation Area) encompasses the central area of the market town with its medieval street pattern. It extends to the north and south of the railway line. Market Square is a key part of the Conservation Area being a historic focus of activity and containing a number of listed buildings. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal, the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole is primarily derived from its historic role as a market town, the intimate layout of its streets, together with the range of notable buildings.
5. Market Square contains a number of listed buildings. No 1 Market Square (grade II listed) occupies a prominent position with visibility in longer views from Church Street as well as being prominent in Market Square due to its distinctive black and white timber frontage and ornate barge boards. At groundfloor level it comprises shopfront windows divided by narrow white mullions, with a recessed entrance door. Nos 13-17 Market Square and Nos 2

and 3 Market Square are also grade II listed buildings fronting on to the square. No 2 Market Square is also described as a building of local interest. Although there is variation in their overall building heights these are all three storey buildings with sash windows and ground floor shopfronts. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal, the significance of these listed buildings is primarily derived from their architectural interest and historic role in the market square.

6. Whilst there are a small number of more modern frontages, such as the Market Square frontage immediately adjoining the appeal site, Market Square is characterised by timber shop fronts with traditional features including tiled, brick or wooden stall risers, moulded pilasters and recessed front entrances. There is a prevalence of shopfront windows with smaller paned glazing in the top, separated from the more expansive display glazing below by a transom. Shopfront glazing is also mostly subdivided by mullions which give a vertical emphasis.
7. The original shopfront of the appeal building comprised a wooden framed window with a recessed entrance door. The proportions of the glazing were consistent with many other traditional looking shopfronts in Market Square, divided by a transom and mullion. It also displayed a number of similar design features including timber beadwork trim stall risers and pilaster. As such it would have made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Given its corner position it frames the view of No 1 Market Square from Church Street. From Market Square and surrounding roads it is also visible in views incorporating the other listed buildings and their elegant shopfronts. In its original form it would therefore have made a small positive contribution to the setting of those grade II listed buildings.
8. In contrast, the appeal scheme comprises a single large windowpane fronting onto Market Square, without the traditional transom or mullion. It is instead framed by a grey metal frame which appears somewhat bulky in this context. The detailed stall risers are replaced by those with a smooth modern finish. There is no longer a beadwork trim pilaster adjacent to the entrance door. Also, the recessed doorway is replaced by one in line with the window glazing. This results in a loss of depth to the frontage which was a pleasing design feature and is prevalent on other shopfronts in the locality. In addition, the fascia panel is of greater depth, which is out of keeping with those of more traditional shopfronts and appears out of scale with the upper storeys of the building.
9. There is consequently a loss of key features that previously added interest and detail and gave a sense of refinement to the shopfront, in keeping with its setting. These have been replaced with a more modern design of a scale and composition that is out of keeping with its historic surroundings. The proposed colour, anthracite grey, is not of itself intrusive. However, the appeal scheme as a whole fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, it harms the significance of the nearby listed buildings.
10. I note that the shopfront is intended to be consistent with other frontages for the same franchise chain that have been used elsewhere. It is also designed to be compatible with sites within conservation areas and in proximity to listed buildings. However, for the reasons given I find that it does result in some harm here. I note that the shop signage is not intended to be back lit and a trough light unit used instead. Also that roller shutters are not proposed here.

However that does not alter the harm arising from the loss of traditional features reasoned above.

11. The appellant highlights other examples of aluminium frontages and boxed framed roller shutters within the Conservation Area. However those are located in other parts of the Conservation Area where traditional shopfronts are much less prevalent than in the vicinity of the appeal site. Furthermore, Market Square is a notable location and focal point within the Conservation Area and contains numerous listed buildings. In comparison to other linear streets with fewer historic buildings or traditional features, it is therefore more susceptible to harm from alterations such as those of the appeal scheme.
12. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Since the proposal is within the Conservation Area and relates to the setting of listed buildings I have had special regard to section 72(1) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The appeal scheme fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and is harmful to the special historic interest of the grade II listed buildings, including the building of local interest. This has a negative effect on the significance of these designated heritage assets which equates to less than substantial harm. In such circumstances this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
13. The appellant submits that it was not viable to repair the original shopfront but no details have been provided to support that contention. The new frontage is submitted as one that achieves greater energy efficiency than the original. However it is not clear whether energy efficiency improvements could have been made to the shopfront whilst also retaining some or all of its traditional features. Accordingly, although the harm I have identified is less than substantial, I have found that public benefits are not sufficient to outweigh it.
14. Therefore, the appeal scheme conflicts with Policy EC10 of the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031 (January 2018) (Local Plan). This supports proposals that are of a high quality design having regard to their surrounding context. It is also contrary to Policy BE5 of the Local Plan. This supports development in conservation areas where it preserves or enhances its character or appearance. It also requires that traditional shopfronts which contribute to the character of a conservation area are retained and repaired through development proposals.
15. Further, it is contrary to Policy BE4 of the Local Plan which requires that any harm to the setting of listed buildings is clearly justified. It is also contrary to Policy BE1 of the Local Plan which, amongst other matters, seeks to ensure that proposals preserve traditional frontages and generally respond positively to their context. Similarly it is contrary to the historic environment chapter of the Framework.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given, and having considered the development plan as a whole along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rachel Hall

INSPECTOR