



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October 2022

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 NOVEMBER 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/W/21/3285364
64 South Street, Romford, London RM1 1RB

- 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 Anthony Solomou of IC Construction against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref P0184.21, dated 28 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 14 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of four roof lights on the second floor with four dormer windows on the South Street elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the replacement of four roof lights on the second floor with four dormer windows on the South Street elevation at 64 South Street, Romford, London RM1 1RB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P0184.21, dated 28 January 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - OS.01 – Site Plan
 - 1902.01 – Ground floor plan
 - EX.01 Rev L – Existing ground floor plan
 - EX.02 Rev K – Existing first floor plan
 - EX.03 Rev K – Existing second floor plan
 - EX.04 Rev K – Existing third floor plan
 - EX.05 Rev K – Existing fourth floor plan
 - EX.06 Rev K – Existing roof plan
 - EX.07 Rev K – Existing front elevation
 - EX.08 Rev K – Existing rear elevation
 - EX.09 Rev K – Existing Section AA
 - EX.10 Rev K – Existing Section BB
 - EX.11 Rev K – Existing Section DD
 - EX.12 Rev K – Existing Section CC, FF and Elevation GG

- 1902.PP.02 Rev L – Proposed first floor plan
 - 1902.PP.03 Rev N – Proposed second floor plan
 - 1902.PP.04 Rev M – Proposed third floor plan
 - 1902.PP.05 Rev M – Proposed fourth floor plan
 - 1902.PP.06 Rev M – Proposed roof plan
 - 1902.PP.07 Rev L – Proposed front elevation
 - 1902.PP.08 Rev K – Proposed rear elevation
 - 1902.PP.09 Rev N – Proposed Section A-A
 - 1902.PP.10 Rev M – Proposed Section B-B
 - 1902.PP.11 Rev K – Proposed Section DD
 - 1902.PP.12 Rev K – Proposed Section CC, FF, GG
- 3) No development shall commence until a written specification of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of walls and roofs of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 4) All building operations in connection with the construction of external walls, roofs; other external site works, including any works of demolition; works involving the use of plant or machinery; the erection of scaffolding; the delivery of materials; the removal of materials and spoil from the site, and the playing of amplified music shall only take place between the hours of 8.00am and 6.00pm Monday to Friday, and between 8.00am and 1.00pm on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and Bank Holidays/Public Holidays.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Anthony Solomou of IC Construction against the Council of the London Borough of Havering. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. The description of development in the banner heading and in my formal decision above is taken from the appeal form; I have used it in preference to the wording used on the planning application form as it provides a more concise description of the proposal.
4. The Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”) on 20 July 2021, replacing the version published in February 2019. While this was after the Council had determined the planning application, both main parties’ appeal submissions refer to the updated Framework. Where I have referred in my decision to specific paragraphs of the Framework, the numbering used is that of the July 2021 version.
5. The Council adopted the new Havering Local Plan (“the HLP”) on 17 November 2021. At the same time the 2008 Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD, the policies of which had been referred to in the decision notice, was withdrawn. The appellant’s appeal statement was submitted before the

adoption of the new plan and therefore referred to the 2008 policies. However, the Council's appeal statement and the appellant's "final comments" were made in the light of the new development plan policies. Given this, it has not been necessary for me to seek separate comments on the new development plan policies. In my reasons below I have referred only to the policies of the HLP, not the superseded DPD policies.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposed dormer windows on the character and appearance of the host building, a non-designated heritage asset ("NDHA"), and the surrounding area.

Reasons

7. 64 South Street stands on the western side of South Street, a busy shopping street within Romford town centre, on a site which stretches back to Exchange Street. The site was originally developed in the first decade of the 20th century¹ as Romford's Post Office. Planning permission was granted in 2015² for the redevelopment of the site to create commercial units on the ground floor with 22 residential apartments above in blocks ranging from two to five storeys in height.
8. The 2015 scheme involved the demolition of considerable portions of the buildings on the site, although the original two-storey façade of the Post Office building to South Street was to be retained and restored as part of that development. By the time of my site visit, the 2015 scheme appeared substantially complete. The South Street frontage has apartments at second-floor level, set behind the original façade within a single pitched roof. A third floor of flats sits further back again from the facade, and I saw that this is largely – though not entirely – screened in views from the street by the pitched roof below and in front.
9. Under the 2015 permission, the third-floor flats would be served by four flush rooflights on the pitched roof facing South Street, although these had not been installed at the time of my site visit. An application to replace the four rooflights with two dormer windows was refused planning permission in August 2020³. The appellant is now seeking permission to install four dormer windows, rather than the four rooflights approved in 2015.
10. The Post Office façade is of red brick with stone dressings to the windows and doors, and there are two prominent decorative stone gables at either side displaying King George V's monogram just below the parapet level. At first floor level, there are six twelve-light windows, one on each of the stone gables, and four on the central brick panel. The architect was Albert Robert Myers of the Office of Works. Following the post-2015 redevelopment, the ground floor has modern shop fronts, but their large windows are broken up by brick pilasters which reflect the form of the first floor above. I saw that the façade as a whole gives the appeal site a street frontage which is both attractive and dignified; its form, materials and detailing make a positive contribution to the streetscene.

¹ The Council's officer report suggests 1902 and the appellant's statement suggests 1906, although that minor discrepancy is not significant in this appeal.

² LPA Ref: P1212.14

³ LPA Ref: P1623.19

11. The Council considers the appeal property to be of local historic importance, as a result of its architectural and cultural significance to the town, and therefore an NDHA, though it also commented that its significance as such is "now primarily derived from the aesthetic of the front elevation, which is the only remaining historic fabric".
12. The appellant, on the other hand, drew attention to the fact that the building is not locally-Listed – although the Council's officer report stated that it was, it subsequently acknowledged that to be an error. I also note the appellant's comment that the appeal site is not identified in any policy or guidance document as being an NDHA, as well as the suggestion that the Council has "overstated" the building's significance as an NDHA.
13. However, while the definition of heritage asset in the Framework's glossary includes assets which are locally-Listed, it is not a prerequisite that an NDHA must be on a local list. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that "local planning authorities may also identify non-designated heritage assets as part of the decision-making process on planning applications"⁴. The Council also drew my attention to another appeal decision elsewhere in the borough where an Inspector supported the Council's having taken such an approach⁵.
14. It is clear that, at least from dealing with the planning application for the 2015 scheme onwards, the Council has recognised the value of the Post Office as "a historically important building", even though the term "non-designated heritage asset" was not actually used in its officer report at the time. This is acknowledged in the appellant's Heritage Statement which accompanied the current planning application.
15. Based on all the evidence before me, including my observations during my site visit, I therefore agree with the Council's assessment of the heritage status of the site, and consider that it is appropriate to treat it as an NDHA. However, it does not necessarily follow from this that I find that the proposed development would cause harm either to the appeal building itself, as an NDHA, or to the wider area.
16. The proposed windows would be aligned vertically above the four windows on the central brick panel at first-floor level; they would also reflect the twelve-light form of the first-floor windows, although they would be smaller and squarer. The dormers would be set behind the parapet of the façade below on the new pitched roof facing the street. The additional built mass which would arise from the proposal would be negligible when considered alongside the bulk of the upper levels already constructed as a result of the 2015 permission. While the appeal proposal contains only limited information on materials and finishes, this is a matter which can satisfactorily be dealt with by a condition. In my view, while they would inevitably be visible from the street, the proposed dormers would be sensitive and relatively discreet additions to the building.
17. I note the Council's comment that "the architectural character of the Neo-Georgian buildings designed by Albert Robert Myers does not feature dormers to the front"; I have no reason to disagree with that statement. However, the retained Post Office façade, from which the bulk of the building's significance as an NDHA is derived, would not be further altered by the proposed

⁴ Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 18a-040-20190723

⁵ PINS Ref: APP/B5480/W/20/3263302

development, and Myers' work would not be undermined or overshadowed by the proposed additions. More generally, dormer windows are often a feature of neo-Georgian architecture, as can be seen on later buildings of the same style elsewhere on South Street (including on the appeal site's immediate neighbour to the north), so the proposed development would not lead to there being some fundamental visual incongruity.

18. The Council also referred to guidance in its 2011 *Residential Extensions & Alterations* Supplementary Planning Document ("the SPD"), which among other things advises that "dormer windows should normally be located facing the rear [...] so they are not visible from the street" and that those "facing the highway should have pitched roofs, unless the use of an alternative form of roof can be clearly demonstrated to be more in keeping with the design of the original dwelling and the character of the street". I note the appellant's comments that the SPD is concerned with residential houses rather than mixed-use developments. However, I recognise that the principles the SPD sets out may well be applicable to mixed-use, rather than purely residential, developments but, having regard to both the advisory status of the SPD and the reasons set out in the preceding paragraph, I consider both the principle of front dormers and the particular form proposed to be acceptable in this case.
19. I conclude that, subject to the aforementioned condition in respect of materials, the proposed development would not harm the character or appearance either of the appeal property, as an NDHA, or the surrounding area. The proposal therefore complies with Policies 7, 26 and 28 of the HLP which, among other things, seek to ensure that development is of a high design quality, respects, reinforces and complements the local streetscene, and protects heritage assets. The proposal also complies with the provisions of the Framework in respect of heritage assets (including NDHAs) as set out in Paragraphs 189, 197 and 203.

Other Matters

20. The Council's evidence described the appeal site as being "located along the southern edge of Romford Conservation Area". In fact, it was apparent from the evidence before me, as well as my observations on site, that the site lies some way south of the closest part of the Conservation Area. Views of the Post Office façade from within the Conservation Area are distant and at very oblique angles; it does not play any significant role in setting the character of the Conservation Area. Nevertheless, having had regard to my statutory duties in this respect, I am satisfied that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved as a consequence of this proposal.

Conditions

21. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have imposed a condition specifying the relevant drawings as this provides certainty. I have also imposed a condition requiring the submission and approval of materials as described in paragraph 16 above. A condition in respect of building operations (and associated noise-producing activities) is necessary to protect living conditions for nearby occupiers during development, although I have amended the Council's suggested wording as the approved development would not involve either excavations or the construction of foundations.

Conclusion

22. There are no material considerations that indicate the application should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

M Cryan

Inspector