



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 December 2022

by Jo Dowling BA(Hons) MPHIL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/Y/22/3293844

89-91 The Parade, High Street, Watford WD17 1LN

- 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 Mr A Avdullahu against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01472/LBC, dated 5 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 30 November 2021.
 - The works proposed are replacement of externally illuminated fascia sign and awnings.
-

Decision

1. This appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for the replacement of externally illuminated fascia sign and awnings at 89-91 The Parade, High Street, Watford WD17 1LN in accordance with the terms of the application ref 21/01472/LBC, dated 5 October 2021 subject to the following conditions:
 1. The works to which this consent relates, must be begun no later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this consent.
 2. The works hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 3450 RPL1 and 3450 RPL2.
 3. Upon completion of any element of the works for which Listed Building Consent is hereby granted, any damage caused to the fabric of the building shall be made good.

Preliminary Matters

2. At the time of my visit there were signs and an awning in place very similar to those shown on the plans submitted with the appeal. I note from the information submitted for the appeal that the current signs and awning were installed without the benefit of either listed building consent or advertisement consent and that there have been a number of applications submitted to regularise this. However, the proposals that are the subject of this appeal would result in the removal of the current sign and awning and replacement with the proposals shown on the submitted plans. I have therefore considered the appeal on this basis.
3. I note that the Council also refused advertisement consent for the proposal as well as listed building consent (LBC). The Appellant's statement refers to the refusal of advertisement consent but an appeal has only been lodged against the refusal of LBC. It is this appeal against the refusal alone that I address below.

4. As part of the appeal submissions, the appellant provided an additional plan (Ref: 3450 RPL2) which shows the proposed elevation and provides a cross section of the sign and awning, which I have considered under the principles established by the Courts in Wheatcroft¹. I am satisfied that it does not change the development to such a degree that to consider it would deprive those who should have been consulted on the change, the opportunity of such consultation. In any event, the Council has had the opportunity to consider the additional plan as part of its submissions.
5. The decision notice refers to policies SS1, UD1 and UD2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 (the Core Strategy) and saved policy U25 of the Watford District Plan 2000 (the District Plan). However, since determining the application the Council have adopted the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 (the Local Plan) which fully supersedes the policies in the Core Strategy and the saved policies of the District Plan. From the information submitted by the Council it would appear that policies SS1, UD1 and UD2 have been replaced by policies SS1.1; QD6.2 and QD6.4; and HE7.1, HE7.2 and HE7.3. In addition the Council have included copies of policies CDA2.3, SA13.1 and VT5.1 in their submission. I have considered the appeal on this basis of these policies.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:

- whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, Monmouth House, and any features of architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and
- the effect of the proposed fascia sign and awnings on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding Civic Core Conservation Area.

Reasons

7. Monmouth House is a three storey substantial early to mid-seventeenth century red brick building. The front façade features four coped gables with parapets between. Whilst the upper floors retain the original symmetrical arrangement of casement windows the ground floor has been modernised and contains a number of retail units. The appeal property occupies a large unit in the centre of the building. To the front of the property is an external seating area.
8. Monmouth House is located in the southern part of the Civic Core Conservation Area which is characterised by a tight urban grain. Whilst buildings vary in height, age and design there is a consistency in the materials and rhythm of the buildings which creates a coherence to the streetscene.
9. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires that when considering a proposal that would affect a listed building or its setting special regard needs to be given to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

¹ Bernard Wheatcroft Ltd v SSE & Harborough DC [1982] P&CR 233

10. The proposal would result in the removal of all pre-existing signs. As a result the proposed fascia sign would be able to be fitted closer to the building than the current sign minimising its forward projection. The new fascia sign would be narrower than the one currently installed and consequently would line through with those on the adjoining properties.
11. The Council's Shopfront Design Guide (2013) (the SDG) indicates that where a store occupies several units, each should have a separate fascia. However, I note from the photographs submitted by both the Appellant and the Council that the previous authorised sign extended across the full width of the unit. Furthermore, when I visited the site, I observed that a number of other double units have single fascia signs. As a result I consider that whilst the proposal would not accord with the guidance contained within the SDG the proposal would not be harmful to the appearance of the listed building or the character and appearance of this part of the Civic Core Conservation Area.
12. The proposed fascia sign would include a low profile centrally located LED lighting strip which would enable the removal of the existing external lighting from the façade of the listed building.
13. The proposed retractable awning would sit just below the fascia sign and would be located at the same height as that on the neighbouring retail unit to the southwest. However, due to the presence of a steel beam I accept that a fully retractable awning would not be possible and as a result the awning box and retracted canopy would, albeit it to a limited extent, project forward of the fascia sign. However, I consider that it would be of limited visual impact given the location of the awning below the fascia sign and as a result it would not obscure or detract from Monmouth Houses' features of architectural or historic interest. Furthermore, I observed from my site visit that many other properties within this part of the Civic Core Conservation Area have retractable awnings similar to that proposed and as a result I do not consider that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the Civic Core Conservation Area.
14. I therefore consider that the proposed illuminated fascia sign and awning would not detract from the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building or its significance or the character and appearance of this part of the Civic Core Conservation Area. As a result the proposal would comply with policies SS1.1, QD6.2, QD6.4, HE7.1 and HE7.2 of the Local Plan which seek to protect heritage assets and require high quality design which takes cues from existing buildings and which is appropriate to the character of the area. These policies reflect the advice contained within Chapters 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Other matters

15. As the proposal is for works to a listed building in a conservation area, I do not consider policy HE7.3 of the Local Plan which deals with non-designated heritage assets relevant to the determination of this appeal and have therefore not taken it into account when reaching my conclusion.
16. Whilst not referred to in their Statement of Case the Council submitted copies of policies CDA2.3 (Colne Valley Strategic Development Area), SA13.1 (Allocated sites for delivery) and VT5.1 (Supporting vibrant retail centres) of the Local Plan. Having reviewed these policies I do not consider them relevant

to the appeal and therefore have not taken them into account when reaching my conclusion.

Conditions

17. In addition to the standard time limit in the interests of enforceability I have imposed a condition requiring the works to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans. As the proposal would result in the removal of the existing signage and lights, I consider that a condition, requiring that any damage to the building by the works be made good, is necessary to ensure that the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the Civic Core Conservation Area is preserved.

Conclusion

18. Accordingly, for the reasons set out and subject to the conditions discussed I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Jo Dowling

INSPECTOR