
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 April 2023

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N2345/D/23/3314490
3 West Road, Preston, Lancashire PR2 8NR

- 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 Waqas Shafique against the decision of Preston City Council.
 - The application Ref 06/2022/0998, dated 21 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of current single glazed wooden frame windows with white uPVC framed double glazed windows and replacement front and back doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the replacement of current single glazed wooden frame windows with white uPVC framed double glazed windows.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to replacement front and back doors and planning permission is granted for replacement front and back doors at 3 West Road, Preston PR2 8NR in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 06/2022/0998, dated 21 August 2022.

Procedural matters

3. The description of development in the above heading is taken from the Council's decision notice. It is a clearer and more succinct description of the proposal than that given on the application form lodged with the Council.
4. I saw that replacement doors at the front and rear of the appeal property have been installed. These doors broadly reflect those shown on the submitted plan.
5. The site falls within the Fulwood Conservation Area (CA). Accordingly, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, as required by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main issue

6. The Council raises no objection to the replacement doors, as proposed. Although of composite material, I, too, find this element of the appeal scheme acceptable in design and appropriate to the style and age of the host building. The replacement doors reflect the style of doors elsewhere within the CA and so preserve the character and appearance of this designated heritage asset.

7. Consequently, the main issue is the effect of the proposed replacement windows on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area, bearing in mind the statutory duty set out above.

Reasons

8. The appeal property is a semi-detached dwelling of traditional style that occupies a prominent corner plot at the confluence of West Road, Victoria Road, and Lower Bank Road within the CA. Like its attached counterpart, No 3 has a ground floor stone bay on each side of the main entrance and a row of 3 first floor windows that are prominent features in the front elevation. In the side wall of No 3 is a ground floor bay near to the adjacent footway with a rectangular first-floor window above and 2 arched windows just below the apex of the roof, all of which are evident from the road.
9. In the area surrounding the site, I saw a variety of historic buildings many of which appear to date from the Victorian period. From the inscription on its upper side wall, the appeal dwelling is one such example. In my view, the significance of the CA as a designated heritage asset largely derives from these buildings and the spaces around them, many of which are well preserved and reflect the development of the area as an early residential suburb of Preston. In that context, the appeal building has significant historic and architectural merit and it is a positive contributor to the character and appearance of the CA.
10. From the information provided, the new white uPVC Linar casement windows would have a slim profile like the existing timber framed windows to be replaced. I note that the existing frames with horns would be replaced with uPVC equivalents. However, the man-made material of the new windows would draw the eye due to its smooth engineered finish, which would noticeably contrast with the less even appearance of the timber frames and the rough texture of the brick walls and the stone bays. This would be discernable especially at the front and side where the new windows would be visible close up. In these views, the stark and rather mechanical finish of uPVC would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal building. In doing so, the proposal would reduce the positive contribution of the building to the CA and thus have a deleterious effect on the character and appearance of this designated heritage asset, which would fail to be preserved.
11. At the site visit, I saw that uPVC windows have been used extensively throughout the CA, including several buildings near to the site, to which the appellant has referred and provided details and photographs. However, many of these cases serve to demonstrate the harm that insensitive or unsympathetic replacement windows can cause. The most pleasing buildings are those that have retained their original features, including their timber windows. It is these buildings that make the greatest contribution to heritage significance and thus should be preserved. Even if the Council has been inconsistent in approving uPVC replacement windows to some properties within the CA and not others, that is insufficient reason in itself to grant planning permission in this case given the identified harm.
12. With technological advances, the latest uPVC framed windows might be of better design quality than those examples that have been installed in the area. Nonetheless, I am not persuaded that this is sufficient reason to accept the loss of the existing windows, which are integral to the appeal building's character. Despite the number of uPVC replacement windows local to the site, traditional timber windows also remain a common characteristic of many buildings close

to the site including the property attached to No 3 and within the CA. They are, therefore, an important part of its special architectural or historic interest.

13. The harm caused would be localised and so the effect on the CA would be less than substantial. Even so, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the conservation of such assets, which I have done. In those circumstances, the Framework states that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, the new windows would improve the thermal and acoustic insulation of the building. I appreciate that uPVC windows are easy to maintain and secure. That many of the existing window frames are in poor condition is also not at issue. However, there is nothing before me to indicate that the benefits could not be achieved by using alternative replacement windows that would be less harmful to the host building and to the CA. Consequently, these benefits do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
14. On the main issue, I conclude that the proposed replacement windows would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. As such, the appeal scheme conflicts with Policy 16 of the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy (2012), Policies AD1(a), EN8 and EN9 of the Preston Local Plan 2012-26 (2015), Saved Policies D13 and H8 of the Preston Local Plan (2004) and the guidance within Council's Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document. These policies and guidance seek to safeguard heritage assets from inappropriate development, and to ensure that proposals protect and enhance local character.
15. It would also be at odds with the Framework, which places great importance on the design of the built environment and on the conservation of heritage assets such as conservation areas. The Framework also states that planning decisions should aim to ensure that development adds to the qualities of an area.
16. As the replacement doors are in keeping with the character and appearance of the host building and the local area, they comply with the policies cited by the Council. This element of the appeal scheme is clearly severable to the proposed windows, which are objectionable. Therefore, I can issue a split decision that grants planning permission solely for them. As the doors are in place, no conditions are necessary.
17. I note the appellant's disappointment that the application was not considered by the Council's Planning Committee that he considers would have allowed the merits of the case to be presented to Members. However, my remit is to determine the appeal on its own merits, which I have done.

Conclusion

18. The proposed replacement windows would conflict with the development plan. There are no material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed in relation to the replacement windows.
19. For the reasons set out above, I also conclude that the appeal should be allowed in relation to the replacement doors.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR