

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 May 2023

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 May 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/23/3314722

59 Cloutsham Street, Northampton, NN1 3LL

- 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 Mrs Maria Jaworska against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref WNN/2022/1207, dated 27 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is External Wall Insulation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed external wall insulation on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the street scene and the Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal dwelling is a modest terraced house situated within the Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area (CA). The street is characterised by similar dwellings set in long terraces, immediately behind the footway. The dwellings are characterised by arched brick lintels above the windows and decorative arches above the front doors. The dwellings show a significant degree of uniformity with a small number having more elaborate decorative features.
4. The dwellings were originally of red brick. The majority retain this finish although a noticeable minority have been rendered and painted. Whilst in some cases this has obscured the brick arched lintels, the decorative arches above the front doors have been retained. These add significantly to the character and appearance of the houses and make an important contribution to the significance, character and appearance of the CA. Moreover, the building line remains uniform.
5. Great weight attaches to the conservation of designated heritage assets, including conservation areas. Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy

Framework (NPPF) 2021 requires clear and convincing justification for any harm to, or loss of the significance of, a designated heritage asset.

6. The Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan (2011) for the Boot and Shoe Quarter CA identifies threats to the CA which include losses of historic fabric, including through rendering and cladding of the brickwork and the introduction of incompatible building materials.
7. The proposed development comprises the addition of external wall insulation to the front and rear elevations of the dwelling, finished in white acrylic render. In view of the limited architectural merit of the rear elevation, its lack of visibility from the public realm and its neutral contribution to the CA I consider that the benefit, in terms of energy efficiency, of the proposed external wall insulation on this elevation would outweigh the limited loss of character and appearance. I note that this part of the proposed development is also of less concern to the Council's Conservation Team.
8. At the time of my site visit the proposed insulation had been applied to the front elevation, although the development appeared to be incomplete. The proposed insulation would stand noticeably proud of the front façade and breach the uniform building line of the terrace. It would also obscure both the brick lintels above the windows and the arched detailing over the front door. Although brick slips are proposed above the windows in order to replicate the appearance of the original lintels, the ornate and characteristic door embellishment would be lost, diminishing the status of the building.
9. Overall, due to the projection from the original façade and loss of original architectural features, the proposed external wall insulation on the front elevation would be materially detrimental to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene of Cloutsham Street and would in consequence harm the significance of the Boot and Shoe Quarter CA. The harm would be less than substantial and, in accordance with the NPPF, must be weighed against any public benefits.
10. The appellant draws attention to the benefits of insulating the property but this would be largely a private benefit with a small public benefit deriving from a limited contribution towards climate change through the improved energy efficiency of the dwelling. Applying great weight to the conservation of the CA, this modest benefit would not be sufficient to overcome the clear detriment to the CA and would be unacceptable.
11. It is concluded on the main issue that, although the cladding of the rear elevation would be acceptable, the proposed external wall insulation on the front elevation would be materially harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene and would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the Boot and Shoe Quarter CA. In consequence, it would conflict with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (CS), 2014, Saved Policies E20, E26 and H18 of the Northampton Local Plan 1993-2006, 1997, and the NPPF. Taken together these expect new development in CAs, including extensions to dwellings which in my view would include the addition of the external wall insulation, to be sympathetic to local character and history, be in keeping with the original dwelling and reflect adequately the character of its surroundings in terms of, amongst other things,

form and materials such that it is sympathetic to locally distinctive design styles and materials and preserves or enhances the character and appearance of those areas.

12. I find limited conflict with CS Policy S10 which seeks to ensure new development achieves sustainable development principles, including being designed to improve energy efficiency, but also expects high standards of design so as to achieve a strong sense of place.
13. The appellant draws my attention to other dwellings in the CA that appear to have been clad in external wall insulation. However, the examples provided in evidence appear to project noticeably less from the original façade and in all cases, where architectural detailing above the front door is a significant feature of the original dwelling, this has been preserved. I do not therefore find these examples readily comparable with the appeal proposal. Further, whilst energy efficiency is important it could be achieved, for example through internal wall insulation, without harming the external appearance of the building.
14. The appellant argues that it is necessary to improve the warmth in the house and sets out in evidence personal circumstances to support this. I have sympathy for her situation. Nevertheless, her personal circumstances would not justify or outweigh the harm to the dwelling and the CA that has been identified. Moreover, as stated above, the use of internal wall insulation would achieve improved energy efficiency without harming the appearance of the host dwelling.
15. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the representations of third parties, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR