The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2023

by Jonathon Parsons MSc BSc DipTP Cert(Urb) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date:

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/Y/22/3297993
8 High Street, Mayfield, TN20 6AA

- 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 Rajesh Sharma against the decision of Wealden District Council.
- The application Ref WD/2021/1047/LBR, dated 28 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 April 2022.
- The works are replacement shopfront with automatic doors.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The shopfront and doors have been installed and the scheme has been considered on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the works (a) preserve listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest they possess, and (b) preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mayfield and Coggins Mill Conservation Area.

Reasons

Listed buildings and Mayfield and Coggins Conservation Area

4. The appeal site, 8 High Street, is the end part of larger two storey range, Grade II listed, which has been extended, altered and subdivided into different properties. The frontage comprises individual single storey shops to the front. In relation to the appeal property, there is the adjacent Walnut Tree House, Grade 11* listed, and beyond this, Middle House Hotel, Grade I listed. The appeal listed building is sited opposite the Gatehouse, Grade II listed and part of the historic Mayfield School complex, and the adjacent Stone House, Grade II* listed. It is also located within the Mayfield and Coggins Mill Conservation Area (MCMCA).

5. For the appeal building, the statutory listing (list entry 1028214) identifies the range as 18th century and refers to four shops in its address, Holmwood Gardens; R Stedman and Sons; J Gravener, Antiques; and Country Wise Properties. The entry also identifies the building to have an attic; modern shop

fronts built out on the ground floor; first floor tile-hanging; half-hipped roof; seven windows, three of them twin windows and three second floor dormers.

6. The appellant's Heritage Assessment (HA)[1] indicates a group of three individual structures fronting onto the High Street during the 1870s and during the 1890s. During this period, the end appeal part of the range was extended behind up to the alley that separates it from Walnut Tree House. Within the building, the 1881 census records a solicitor in residence whilst the 1891 census records a draper, grocer and butcher. The Council's statement details that the building was provided with shopfronts in the later 19th century. A postcard from 1905 shows front elevation of the entire range in a matching, light-coloured finish at first floor level whilst illustrating a unified shop front extension at ground floor level. Further alterations and additions took place to the rear from 1910s and in the 1970s, the range was subdivided into different properties.

7. In 1958, a new shopfront was consented comprising multi-coloured brick plinth, timber doors, window frame, fascia and side timber pilaster columns. In 1991, the two entrance doors were moved forward from their recessed position and aligned with the rest of the shopfront. Within the HA, a photograph of the shopfront shows a green coloured brick stallriser, blue projecting signage and roller shutter/blind. There is a dispute with the Council as to whether the roller shutter has been approved but the roller shutter does not appear on the approved plans for the shopfront and there is no evidence that it has been formally consented.

8. The 1958 consented shopfront, as altered by the 1991 entrance door consent, still retained traditional features such as pilasters, stallrisers, plinths and fanlights above a transom. Similarly, the rest of the shopfronts on the listed buildings are traditional in character and appearance with stallrisers, multi-glazed timber barred windows and recessed features. Whilst the listed building has changed, the additions, extensions and alterations also depict how it has historically evolved and adapted within a historic village centre, with commercial uses. For this listed building, it's significance and special interest comes from its considerable age, evolution and adaptation, architectural features and surviving historic fabric.

9. Walnut Tree House is a two storey building dating back to the 15th century. Its statutory listing (list entry 1193529) confirms a timber-framed building with plaster infilling, the first floor close-studded and oversailing on moulded bressummer and brackets; tiled roof; first floor windows and casement windows projecting on brackets. There are bay windows built out on ground floor and a 16th century wing behind.

10. Next to Walnut Tree House, Middle House Hotel has group value and is two storey with attic accommodation within a tiled roof, including gables, and dates back to 1575. Its statutory listing (list entry 1028215) indicates plaster infilling with timbers, a ground floor close-studded on a base of stone and red brick, casement windows of 2 tiers of 4 light, each with wooden mullions and transoms and above this, ornamental circular timbering. The gables are oversailing on moulded bressummer and brackets, with carved bargeboards. The bay window below the west gable projects on brackets.

[1] Retrospective Heritage Assessment, the heritage advisory, THA Ref: 2022/5537, January 2022.

11. Opposite the appeal building, the Gatehouse of the Old Palace (The Convent of the Holy Child Jesus, St Leonard's Mayfield School) has group value and is two-three storeys, dating back to 20th century. The statutory listing (list entry 1028178) details a 15th Century arch of the gateway of the palace of the Archbishops of Canterbury incorporated in a new building added by Edward Welby Pugin in 1863-6. It is constructed with ashlar stone, casement windows with stone mullions and tiled roof. It has a distinctive centre gateway of three storeys and three windows with a tall pointed carriage archway and gabled projections on each side.

12. Adjacent to the Gatehouse, there is the Stone House, which is two storey dating back to the 18th century. The statutory listing (list entry 1028179) indicates a guesthouse use for the Convent of the Holy Child Jesus. It is also constructed with ashlar stone and tiled roof above. The basement casement windows have stone mullions whilst the sash windows above have obtusely pointed heads with glazing bars. There is a porch with Ionic columns and modillion cornice, and a doorway with obtusely pointed head.

13. The design, detailing and form, along with age, of these listed buildings represent historical and architectural qualities contributing to their significance and interest. In this regard, Walnut Tree House and Middle House Hotel are high quality medieval buildings, with exposed timber framing and plaster infilling, and projecting elements, such as the jettied floors and projecting windows on brackets, fronting onto the High Street. Both Gatehouse and Stone House are later in date but constructed with stone, with high quality traditional materials and detailing prevailing. All these buildings, have physical and functional connection to the High Street, a major and busy thoroughfare through the village since at least medieval times, because of their orientation and entrances/exits onto it. As such, this is a key aspect of how these assets are experienced and in so far as relating to the scheme before me, the frontage public realm forms the setting of these buildings.

14. The MCMCA comprises historic buildings dating back to medieval times and has undergone much change and development over the centuries, including with the railways in the 20th century. It has evolved and expanded from its medieval core focussed on the church, High Street and Archbishop's Palace. The draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) Mayfield and Coggins Mill (2020) identifies a medieval village core where the character is from a mix of periods, dating back from the 14th century, representing a mix of styles. The CACA describes the character of 18th century buildings in this core area, with varied materials, including blue and red brick chequered pattern, white painted brick, tile-hanging, weatherboarding and use of stone in higher status building.

15. The significance and special interest of the MCMCA derives from the inherent architectural and historic qualities of its buildings and places. Forming an important part of the village's historic development, evolution and built backcloth, the appeal site contributes positively to MCMCA, taken as a whole.

Effects of proposal

16. The current unauthorised shop front comprises dark grey coloured aluminium shopfront and facia, and a roller shutter box. Within the shopfront, there is extensive glazing across the whole width of its frontage, extending to ground level. The bottom half of the glazing and that around the shop till has dark grey, and in part, green coloured backing. The dark grey colour has been

chosen to complement the dark Tudor timber detailing on adjacent and nearby buildings. Existing brickwork between the adjoining shop and the alleyway, either side of the shopfront, has been retained. Parts of the old shopfront glazing also had multi-coloured backing.

17. However, whilst degraded and of a 1950s/1960s style, the original shopfront still had traditional features in keeping with the architectural and historic qualities of the listed building. The new shopfront and alterations have resulted in the removal of these traditional features, the timber shopfront and doors, the bricked stallriser and pilaster detailing on either side of the shopfront, and fanlight windows above the entrance doors. The new extensive glazing gives rise to an overly dominant feature compared to the more refined and scaled down architectural features of the listed building. Both the former shopfront and those adjacent are more architecturally detailed and articulated with their traditional features. In this regard, other shopfronts on the listed building have multi-glazed timber barred windows, stallrisers and recessed features, such as entrances.

18. The shiny and smooth coating to the shopfront, including fascia, also jars with the more muted painted and textured timber shopfronts on the remainder of the listed building. There is also a bulky and awkward box like projection below the fascia which further emphasises the incongruous modern nature of the shopfront. For all these reasons, the works do not preserve the special architectural and historical interest of the listed building leading to conflicts with s66(1) and s16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

19. The modern shopfront appears prominent in views of the Walnut Tree House and Middle House Hotel, when walking up and down the High Street, including on the opposite side to the appeal site. Given the importance of the High Street as a long-established thoroughfare, this is material. As a result, the shopfront detracts from the traditional materials and detailing of these medieval listed buildings and their settings. Consequently, the works would not preserve the special architectural and historical interest of the listed buildings leading to conflicts with s66(1) and s16(2) of the Act. Both the Gatehouse and Stone House, lie on the opposite side of the High Street. In views, the incongruous nature of materials and design would not be noticeable in relation to these listed buildings due to this physical and visual separation from 8 High Street due to width of the highway and the setting of these listed buildings would not be affected.

20. For the MCMCA, it follows that if the special interest of listed buildings are not preserved, prominently located as they are, then the character and appearance of the MCMCA, taken as a whole, would be incrementally harmed. Accordingly, there would be conflict with s72(1) of the Act. The degree of harm to the significance of each of the heritage assets would be less than substantial.

Heritage balance

21. Following irreparable damage caused by a car accident, the shopfront had to be replaced at short notice to maintain structural building integrity and secure the property. The shopfront has been designed to be of a higher security standard, given a previous ramraid and theft. The shopfront and signage was chosen from standard options provided by the franchise currently operating from the

shop/site. The new shopfront has enabled an optimum retail use to continue for the front and end part of this listed building.

22. However, there has been little detailed evidence before me of the exploration of feasible alternatives, including bespoke solutions. There was a traditional shopfront before on the building and there are others on the listed building and within the High Street. Notwithstanding this, it has been found to fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of this building, the settings of Walnut Tree House and Middle House Hotel, and the character and appearance of the MCMCA. As a result, for each designated heritage asset, the modest public benefits, which accruing from the scheme, would not be sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm identified and the considerable importance and weight this carries. For each designated heritage asset, conflict arises with the historic environmental protection policies of the Framework. Under the Framework, conflict with historic environment policies provides a clear reason for refusal.

23. In falling to comply with the legislative listed building and Conservation Area requirements, the scheme is contrary to Policy EN1, EN19 and EN27 of Wealden Local Plan 1998 and Policy WCS14 of the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013, which collectively and amongst other matters, require sustainable development, schemes to be resisted that do not preserve or enhance character, scale and visual amenity and materials, and design to be of appropriate design standard.

Conclusion

24. The scheme fails to meet the statutory duties in relation to listed buildings and the Conservation Area. There would be conflict with the development plan and the Framework, taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that warrant determining the appeal otherwise. The appeal should be dismissed.

Jonathon Parsons

INSPECTOR