



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 May 2023

by Mr JP Sargent BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/22/3309451

11-13 Station Parade, Kew, Richmond TW9 3PT

- 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 Gail's Limited against the decision of Richmond Upon Thames London Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/0672/FUL, dated 28 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is shopfront alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to 13 Station Parade, Kew, Richmond TW9 3PT.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to 11 Station Parade, and planning permission is granted for shopfront alterations at 11 Station Parade, Kew, Richmond TW9 3PT in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/0672/FUL, dated 28 February 2022, and the plans submitted with it, in so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted.

Preliminary matters

3. The works before me appear to have been undertaken already, though for the avoidance of doubt I confirm I have considered the scheme against the submitted plans.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this case are whether the development fails to preserve the character or appearance of the Kew Gardens Conservation Area and whether it harms the significance of that designated heritage asset and/or a Building of Townscape Merit.

Reasons

5. The area covered by the conservation area appears to have been established as a prestigious suburb in the late 19th/ early 20th Century. Its significance lies partly in the way these origins are still reflected in its built form, with the detailing and arrangement of the properties contributing to its character and appearance.
6. I was told the terrace on the northern side of Station Parade (the terrace) dates from the Edwardian period. Its upper 2 floors still appear to reflect its original design, displaying a strong and bold uniformity, dominated by a rhythm of 2 storey bays with matching window treatments. On the ground floor of the terrace are retail units, with their front elevations comprising shop

frontages of a range of styles. When taken with a similar terrace on the opposite side of Station Parade, the quality of built form and the commercial focus here no doubt reflects the layout of the original suburb and so adds positively to an understanding of the conservation area. However, there is an appreciable diversity in the nature of the frontages to the commercial units in the terrace, with some better reflecting the historic context than others. The 2 properties this bakery/coffee shop occupies are the last in the terrace, though they are joined on their eastern side by a further building (the corner building) of a similar age but a different design, which is on the corner with Station Approach.

7. Before the works subject of this appeal were undertaken, I understand from the submitted photographs that 11 Station Parade had a relatively modern ground floor frontage dating from the 1960s or 1970s. Its design was very much of that era, comprising tall narrow openings with louvres above and a tiling finish in between. In my judgement, this did little to respect the conservation area. The scheme before me has broadly retained this arrangement but the areas of tiling have now been replaced with a render. To my mind the presence of the windows and door breaks up the expanse of the render and means it is not too extensive. Given the painted stall risers elsewhere on the terrace and on the corner building, and mindful of the previous frontage, I consider this finish is not of an extent that means it is harmful or discordant here.
8. I understand that the windows have, to a great extent, been inserted into the openings that existed beforehand, and I find their frames to be clean and crisp, and sympathetic to this frontage arrangement. While the presence on the unit of 3 canopies, each set back into an opening, is not a pattern that is found elsewhere on the terrace, the canopies that are present at the other outlets are of a variety of heights and styles. Similarly, although the fascia has been handled differently at No 11, there is again a range of fascia depths and treatments. Therefore, the scheme before me would not be an appreciable or adverse departure from the diversity found amongst the existing frontages in the terrace and on the corner building, and would be suitably sympathetic to this situation.
9. Consequently, I conclude the works to No 11 are not discordant, do not fail to preserve the character or appearance of the conservation area, and do not harm its significance. As such they do not conflict with Policies LP1 and LP3 in the *London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Local Plan*, which seek development of a high architectural quality that conserves the historic environment, or the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework).
10. I see no conditions need be imposed on the works to this frontage. Although the Council has suggested the imposition of a condition requiring the development to be in accordance with the approved plans, as it is accepted that the scheme is retrospective that is not necessary.
11. Turning to 13 Station Parade, this was originally a bank. With its window treatments, its decoration, and its cladding, it has a solid, robust front elevation on the ground floor that reflects its former use, displaying a sense of status and security. These matters contribute to its significance, and it has therefore been identified as a Building of Townscape Merit, and a non-designated heritage asset.

12. Although I understand there has been some alteration to the window sizes as a result of the removal of the ATM, I nonetheless consider they still respect the building's solid appearance. However, the door has been removed and replaced with glazing. To my mind this has a harmful and adverse impact, as it notably diminishes the elevation's robustness, and so reduces an appreciation of its former use and harms the building's significance as a non-designated heritage asset. Furthermore, by adversely affecting No 13 in this way, it also causes harm, albeit less than substantial, to the significance of the conservation area, detracting from its character and appearance.
13. In coming to this view, I recognise that when operating as a bank its door would no doubt have been open at times. However, to my mind that would have created a very different impression to the glazing there now, as the door would still have been apparent within the opening. I also accept that the door has not been expressly mentioned as a feature of importance in conservation area documents and similar but, in my opinion, it is intrinsic in maintaining the fundamental character of the building as a former bank. While reference was made to a supplementary planning document concerning shop fronts, I am aware of nothing in that that would lead me to a different conclusion in this instance.
14. The appellant has said that the scheme has brought back into use a vacant unit that detracted from the conservation area, but I have little to support the contention that it would have remained empty without these works. The removal of the door may benefit the use by opening up the property and attracting customers in. However, on the evidence before me and having particular regard to paragraphs 199, 202 and 203 in the Framework, I consider that these points do not amount to a benefit of sufficient weight to outweigh the harm I have identified to both the designated and non-designated heritage assets.
15. Accordingly, I conclude the works to No 13 harm the significance of that Building of Townscape Merit, while causing less than substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area, and not preserving its character or appearance. In the absence of any benefits to outweigh this harm the works conflict with Local Plan Policies LP1 and LP3, Local Plan Policy LP4, which seeks to preserve the significance of non-designated heritage assets, and the Framework.

Conclusions

16. I have found that the works to No 11 do not conflict with the development plan, whilst there would be a conflict in the case of No 13. Mindful that these are 2 distinct and separate frontages, albeit to units that are connected internally, I conclude the appeal is allowed insofar as it concerns No 11 and dismissed insofar as it relates to No 13.

JP Sargent

INSPECTOR