



## Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 July 2023

**by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 September 2023

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### **Appeal A Ref: APP/G5750/W/23/3320416**

**North Woolwich Old Station Museum, Pier Road, North Woolwich, London E16 2JJ**

- 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 Rev O Akintola of The New Covenant Church Woolwich against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Newham.
  - The application Ref 21/02261/FUL, dated 9 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 7 July 2022.
  - The development proposed is ground floor single storey rear extension and internal alterations to existing layouts to Grade II Listed building.
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### **Appeal B Ref: APP/G5750/Y/22/3313459**

**North Woolwich Old Station Museum, Pier Road, North Woolwich, London E16 2JJ**

- 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 Rev O Akintola of The New Covenant Church Woolwich against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Newham.
  - The application Ref 21/02267/LBC, dated 23 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 July 2022.
  - The works proposed are ground floor single storey rear extension and internal alterations to existing layouts to Grade II Listed building.
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## Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

## Main Issue

2. The site comprises a place of worship within the former North Woolwich Old Station Museum, located inside the Grade II Listed building 'North Woolwich Station Including Turntable and Lamps' (hereafter the Station). In that context, the main issue to be considered is the effect of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

## Reasons

3. Upon opening in 1847 the Station served as a terminus of the Eastern Counties and Thames Junction Railway. It largely draws significance from its Tuscan influenced architectural composition and its layout. Its interior is well-preserved with original walls providing legibility of discrete public and office spaces. Of particular interest are the arches within the walls at ground floor, the chimney breasts in each of the waiting rooms, and the ticket office wall, the latter complete with counters. The waiting areas lead out to the platform, beyond which is the turntable. Given such, the site offers an excellent insight into the functionality and atmosphere of a railway terminus in Victorian East London.

4. I recognise that the scheme seeks to retain and replicate the main spine wall arch. Nonetheless, the far more open plan arrangement would necessitate the removal of significant amounts of structural Victorian fabric and to such extent that the historic ground floor would be significantly harmed. In particular, this would include the demolition of the chimney breasts and the ticket office wall and its fittings. Even with a lightweight design and the incorporation of the historic cast iron columns and brackets, the rear extension would enclose the open platform which would have historically hosted the important flow of movement and interchange for passengers between the station and the trains.
5. For these reasons, harm to the significance of the listed building would arise. I would quantify the harm to the designated heritage asset as less than substantial, but at the upper end of a notional sliding scale of that harm.
6. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) explains that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 200 states that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.
7. Paragraph 202 goes on to require decision makers to weigh any less than substantial harm to such an asset against the public benefits of the scheme, including securing its optimum viable use. Here, that balancing exercise takes place within the context of s.16(2) and s.66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which set a strong presumption against a grant of planning permission or listed building consent for development or works that would cause harm to the special interest of a listed building.
8. Finding a new use for this at-risk building is imperative, and as a place of worship that use would be found in a manner that would secure a long-term community function and public access. However, finding a new use for this building should not come at the unacceptable expense of its significance. It has not been clearly or convincingly justified that the wide breadth of harmful interventions proposed is essential to secure a new use for the Station. It follows that it is not demonstrated that the proposal represents its optimum viable use. As such, the weight I attach to the public benefits of the scheme falls short of justifying the harm that it would cause; harm that must be given considerable importance and weight in the balancing exercise.
9. Moreover, that conclusion brings the proposal into conflict with the heritage and design objectives of Policies D3, D4 and HC1 of the London Plan (adopted 2021), Policies SP1, SP2, SP3, SP5 and SP8 of the Newham Local Plan 2018 (adopted 2018) and the Framework.

## **Conclusion**

10. With reference to Appeal A, the proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and the other considerations before me do not indicate that I should make a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
11. For these given reasons, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

*Matthew Jones*  
INSPECTOR