



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 November 2023

by Jonathan Price BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI DMS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/W/23/3321317

St George's House, Apartment 4, The Esplanade, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0QG

- 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 Peter Mitchell against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref DC/23/0767/FUL, dated 22 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 25 April 2023.
 - The development proposed is change from French doors to bi-fold doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The work to replace the earlier, non-original French door with bi-fold doors has already been carried out.

Main Issues

3. Whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the South Lowestoft Conservation Area (CA), considering also its effect on the host property as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

4. The works relate to a lounge opening on the third floor of a four-storey semi-detached property containing residential apartments. This is on the elevation facing the sea front Esplanade. Although at the rear of St George's House, this elevation is in a publicly prominent position, readily visible to passers-by.
5. According to its published Appraisal¹, the wider CA is significant for its distinctive developed character and appearance as a mid-nineteenth century seaside pleasure resort. This was evidently a formally planned part of town, with central roads and grid like streets radiating out to afford views towards the sea. Green and open spaces were designed into the townscape and contribute to its strong sense of grandeur. The town's maritime connections are discernible through building orientations, building types, statues, and spaces such as the promenades and piers. These provide focal points within the CA and contribute to its special interest.
6. St George's House comprises one of the large buildings which give this area a sense of grandeur and historic interest. The Appraisal describes this large, late

¹ South Lowestoft/Kirkley Conservation Area Appraisal – East Suffolk Council, January 2022.

nineteenth century house as being of notable architectural interest, with fine detailing which makes a positive contribution in this prominent seafront location. It also notes its historic interest, as a high-quality example and representation of the pattern of building in South Lowestoft at this time.

7. The bi-fold doors open onto a small balcony set behind the low parapet on top of the bay window situated below. The original fenestration has been lost throughout the rear elevation of this semi-detached building. However, other than in the case of this present development, the original openings and surrounding detailing remain largely intact. In this case, the window has clearly been expanded either side of the brick arch defining its original width, with the consequential removal of the original brick detailing that once defined each of its sides.
8. The widening of this window and the introduction of contemporary bi-fold doors has disrupted the balanced proportions to the openings on this elevation and eroded some of its original architectural character and detailing. The works have therefore not amounted to the particularly high standard of design and materials necessary to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. The development for which permission is sought therefore conflicts with Waveney Local Plan² (WLP) Policy WLP 8.39, concerning development within conservation areas. Through the CA Appraisal the building is identified as a non-designated heritage asset. The failure to conserve or enhance its character and appearance as such conflicts further with Policy WLP 8.37.
9. In determining this appeal, I have a duty under section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
10. The proposal involves less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA. However, applying NPPF paragraph 202, this harm would not be outweighed by any discernible public benefits deriving from the proposal. There would be moderate harm to the significance of the building as a non-designated heritage asset which, under NPPF paragraph 203, also weighs negatively in the balance.

Conclusion

11. There are no countervailing grounds to support this proposal, in the light of the heritage harm discussed above. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

Jonathan Price

INSPECTOR

² East Suffolk Council – Waveney Local Plan covering the former Waveney Local Planning Authority area. Adopted 20 March 2019.