



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 April 2024

by **S J Lee BA(Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H1033/W/23/3327936

36 Norfolk Street, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 7QU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Brad & Phillips North West Limited against the decision of High Peak Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is HPK/2020/0354.
 - The development proposed is partial demolition of external wall.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The parties have variously referred to an application for the conversion of the neighbouring George Hotel in their evidence. I understand that this has since been determined and permission has been refused by the Council. Where appropriate, I have had regard to this in my decision.
3. Since the appeal was submitted, the Government has published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The relevant parts to this appeal have not changed significantly and thus there was no need to consult the parties. I have however taken account of the revised Framework in my decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Glossop Norfolk Square Conservation Area (GNSCA).

Reasons

5. The appeal relates to a short section of stone wall located between the vacant George Hotel and 36 Norfolk Street. The site sits within the GNSCA. The wall had already been demolished at the time of my visit. There was already a gap in the frontage prior to these works taking place. This was ostensibly used to facilitate the parking of a vehicle. The remainder of the wall has now been removed and it is this element to which the appeal applies.
6. The Glossop Norfolk Square Conservation Area comprises of a large part of the town centre, as well as substantial residential areas. To the north, it also contains a large area of open space. While Norfolk Square gives its name to the area, it would be wrong to conclude the only significance is derived from this formal public square. Clearly this is important both aesthetically and in terms of

it being a focal point for the town centre. The conservation area extends well beyond this square and includes an array of 19th century commercial and residential buildings. The age, architecture and broad consistency of stone materials used illustrate the historic character and growth of the town. It is these features which gives the area its significance as a whole. This includes the railway station and buildings around it, including the George and Star Hotels on Norfolk Street. These are indicative of the growth of the town and influence of the railway. The George Hotel takes up a prominent position roughly opposite the station and, although currently vacant and slightly dilapidated, nevertheless makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

7. The wall obviously formed only a small part of the conservation area. Nevertheless, I disagree that it would have been of no architectural merit. The wall itself was a tall and imposing feature. The photographs provided suggest some detailing of the wall, including the coping, matched the detailing of the George Hotel. This would have emphasised the relationship between the wall and this highly prominent building. The wall would also have been part of an almost continuously built-up frontage to the junction with Ellison Street. There is also a similar tall wall on the last stretch of road to the junction. The wall would therefore have been part of a relatively harmonious and long stretch of frontage. With this, and its obvious relationship with the important George Hotel, I consider the wall would have made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Norfolk Street and thus to the conservation area.
8. The wide gap which now exists in the frontage is quite stark and conspicuous in the street scene. It is highly noticeable when travelling along Norfolk Road in both directions and when standing outside the railway station, roughly opposite the site. While a gap previously existed, photographic evidence suggests this was relatively narrow and a large proportion of the high wall remained in place. Demolishing the wall in its entirety has removed any vestiges of the original features and the large gap constitutes a somewhat discordant feature.
9. It has also opened up views of the small yard area. There is a high wall to the rear, with the blank flank walls of neighbouring properties to either side. These are now fully visible and have become more overt as a result of the wall's removal. These are not attractive features. The yard is a small area which, at present, is untidy with self-setting trees, weeds and rubble. Although the appellant has indicated an intention to tidy the area up, there is no mechanism before me to ensure this takes place or is maintained. In any event, revealing this space has further eroded the appearance of the street.
10. The development has therefore removed what was left of a notable feature in the street scene. The creation of a large and incongruous gap, losing almost all signs of what was previously in place, including the detailing of the wall and any sense of enclosure, have eroded the overall aesthetic and architectural quality of the area. The development has therefore failed to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. It therefore conflicts with High Peak Local Plan (2016) Policy EQ7, which seeks to conserve heritage assets and prevent the loss of features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area. The harm that would be caused to the significance of the conservation area would be less than substantial. In such circumstances, paragraph 208 of the Framework requires the harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the development.

11. In this case, the appellant argues that the benefits are two-fold. Firstly, that it would improve highway and pedestrian safety by providing better visibility of, and for, vehicles exiting the site. Secondly, that opening up the space allows for public safety improvements by allowing natural surveillance of the area.
12. Although I have no information on the status of any parking space, the previous gap appears to have facilitated parking within the yard. The previous gap also appears to have been very narrow and there would be little to no visibility for vehicles exiting the site without encroaching onto the pavement first. The increase in width of the gap has likely improved the situation slightly, particularly for pedestrians who would be able to see more of any vehicle intending to exit the yard. Nevertheless, there would still be no visibility splays and, to clearly see in both directions, vehicles would still need to encroach onto the pavement. The development does not therefore entirely remove the risks to passers-by. Furthermore, it is not clear whether similar benefit could not have been achieved without the complete removal of the wall. As such, I give only limited weight to this factor.
13. The appellant has suggested that the yard had previously been subject to anti-social behaviour and that the wall hid such activity from view. The argument is that removing the wall in its entirety may discourage such activity taking place in the future. However, I am not persuaded that there are not other means by which anti-social behaviour could be addressed. Moreover, there is no substantive evidence of the regularity in which such activity took place or how severe it may have been. As such, I consider any benefits in this regard to be limited.
14. The appellant has drawn my attention to the potential for this space to be used for parking alongside any re-use of the George Hotel. It has also been suggested removing the wall may help facilitate any future scheme. However, as noted above, the most recent application has been refused by the Council and thus there is no evidence to suggest the use of the space for parking, or removal of the wall, would be important in bringing the George Hotel back into use.
15. Even if the effect on the conservation area and its significance are at the lower end of the spectrum of harm, the public benefits are also extremely limited. I therefore do not consider that these outweigh the harm that has been caused to the heritage asset. The development therefore also conflicts with paragraph 205 of the Framework, which seeks to ensure that great weight is given to the conservation of heritage assets.

Other Matters

16. The site is in close proximity to a number of listed buildings. This includes the Grade II listed railway station and buildings on Ellison Street, situated to the rear of the site. Although it may open up some views of the rear of the buildings on Ellison Street, there is no evidence before me to suggest the space has any functional or historic connection to these buildings. It would also not affect the ability to appreciate the buildings, particularly their principal elevations. The site is more closely related to the railway station and is visible from its environs. While the gap can be seen *from* the station, the site and station are mainly not seen in context with each other. As such, I do not consider there would be any direct impact on the significance of the station

itself. This does not alter the harm caused to the character, appearance or significance of the conservation area.

Conclusion

17. The development conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

S J Lee

INSPECTOR