

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 May 2024

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/23/3333709

Highfield, Sherborne Road Basingstoke Hampshire RG21 5TG

- 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 Mrs Kiran Johal, Alphabet City Day Nursery, against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00760/FUL, dated 27 April 2023, was refused by notice dated 12 October 2023.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of timber sash windows with PVCu woodgrain finish 'timber alternative' windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the replacement of timber sash windows with PVCu woodgrain finish 'timber alternative' windows at Highfield, Sherborne Road Basingstoke Hampshire RG21 5TG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/00760/FUL, dated 27 April 2023, subject to the following conditions:
 1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan, Block Plan - Plan Reference Number: TQRQM23089220317361 & Heritage Statement.
 3. No works shall commence until full working details of the new windows hereby approved have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include annotated elevations and sections. These details shall illustrate the nature of materials and finishes, framing members, glazing, glazing units, glazing bars, means of achieving background ventilation, and methods of opening. Details shall be at a minimum scale of 1:20 and 1:5. The works shall be carried out and thereafter maintained in accordance with the details so approved.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and locality.
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Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a sizeable 1900s detached two storey building that is set up and back on the east of Sherborne Road with a parking area to the front and a low retaining wall and low-level planting. Formerly a dwelling it is now a children's nursery. It is in red brick and tile, with a projecting double height front gable and bay window. To the front of the original property, the windows consist of single glazed timber windows and the proposal is to replace all of these sash and casement units with double glazing as described above. The character of the area is primarily residential in nature varying from smaller scale more recent housing west of Sherborne Road to larger villa style homes being more characteristic to the east of this relatively busy highway. The appearance of this immediate stretch of Sherborne Road is pleasant but unremarkable with the attractiveness of street scenes increasing eastwards.
4. The site lies within the western edge of the South View Conservation Area. There is a duty imposed by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This is reflected within Policy EM11 of the Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 (LP) which takes the same approach and includes a range of elaborating criteria.
5. I can entirely see the reasoning of the Council, through its interpretation of policy protection and practice in development control, seeking to secure that replacement windows in Conservation Areas will be constructed in traditional materials. I understand and acknowledge the planning officer's report's criticism of the detail relating to PVCu windows. In the vast majority of cases, in my experience, a negative stance in a Conservation Area, including this one, would be the appropriate approach. As an exception I differ in this case.
6. The appeal property is marked by the Council as a Notable Building within the Conservation Area, an identification given to the majority of properties within this. Certainly, it is of some visual interest but to my mind this stems primarily from the massing, levels, set back and overall principal elevational elements and articulated frontage and roof rather than the fenestration detail. Additionally, the distance from the road and buildings around limit most opportunities to closely register the windows in place.
7. These windows are, I observed, in very poor condition and I have no doubt that repair would be a very difficult and expensive task, if achievable, and removal would be the solution. Replacement with a white woodgrain PVCu will never entirely replicate what was in situ historically but, with conditioned details, it will be close, and to my mind in this unusual instance would preserve the character and appearance of the building and the Conservation Area. This is not in a run of impressive properties in one of the nearby right-angle avenues which all contribute to the street scenes by their, generally, original window forms and materials. Neither is it a part of a repetitive terrace in the south

east part of the Conservation Area. It is a set-back building on a rather disjointed stretch of road with properties north, south and east all without timber windows.

8. Given all these circumstances and the nature of the scheme I conclude that the proposal would not run contrary to the aims of S72(1) of the Act or conflict with LP Policy EM11. I also conclude that the scheme would not run contrary to LP Policy EM10 which seeks high quality development with appropriate aesthetic attributes. I would deem there to be no breach of the over-arching objectives of the Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (2018) or Heritage Supplementary Planning Document (2019) and this guidance cannot be expected to cover every detailed eventuality.
9. I would add that I am fully aware of the all the Historic England documents referred to by the Council and have taken these into account. Furthermore, I have considered the range of appeal decisions referred to by the Council and other parties and I find none to be directly comparable to this proposal by reason of siting, specific design or wider contextual background and, in any event, I must assess this case on its own merits.
10. I do note the pro-business points, the comfort of children and the community function of these premises all raised by parties and these do add slight weight to the case for the appeal scheme but are not determining factors.

Conditions

11. I agree with the Council that the decision would call for the standard commencement condition along with a condition that works are to be carried out in accordance with listed, approved, plans as this provides certainty. I also would concur that more precise details of planned windows should be submitted; in the interests of protecting the aesthetic merits of this building and the wider area.

Overall conclusion

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal proposal would not have unacceptable effects on the character or appearance of the host property or the locality. Accordingly, the appeal is allowed.

D Cramond
INSPECTOR