
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 February 2025

by Jane Smith MA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/W/24/3350275

The Vine PH, Vine Street, Great Bardfield, Essex CM7 4SR

- 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 Mr John Emery (JRE Chartered Surveyors) against the decision of Braintree District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00559/FUL.
 - The development is described as 'Single Storey rear extension to main building. Constructed with a steel frame, flat roof with 4no UPVC roof lanterns. Powder coated aluminium folding/sliding doors to rear and side elevation with faux weatherboarding to sides and fascia board.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The extension has been built and therefore I am considering the appeal retrospectively. As far as could be determined from observation on site, the completed structure corresponds with the plans and elevations provided. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal based on the application drawings, while also taking account of the external materials as observed on site.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the extension on relevant designated and non-designated heritage assets, with particular regard to the external materials.

Reasons

Relevant Heritage Assets

4. The appeal site contains The Vine public house (PH) facing the road and a range of ancillary buildings at the rear, together with a car park and beer garden. There is a public right of way (PROW) through the site, which connects the built-up frontage of Vine Street with a much more open rural landscape at the rear.
5. The site is within the Great Bardfield Conservation Area (CA), the significance of which includes its well-preserved historic streetscape, in which vernacular materials and detailing are prevalent on the oldest buildings and later additions are harmoniously integrated. In the CA as a whole, there is a rich variety of external materials, with painted render in a variety of colours, warm red brick and horizontal timber weatherboarding all prevalent. Window frames are generally timber, often with narrow glazing bars, with apparently very few modern replacements. The

harmonious range of traditional external materials and detailing makes a clear and positive contribution to the significance of the CA.

6. The Vine PH dates from the early 20th Century and is on the site of an original 16th Century public house. It is described as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) by the Council based on evidence from its Historic Buildings Consultant and its status as such is not contested. The PH is prominently located in the centre of the village. The main building is of red facing brick, with white-painted timber window frames and dark grey render on the ground floor at the front. There is a modern single storey extension to one side and a range of more serviceable, single storey elements at the rear, to which the extension is attached. Despite being one of the more recent buildings, the PH makes a positive contribution to the CA, in terms of its external detailing, prominent position and clearly identifiable role as a public house and focus for community life.
7. The ancillary buildings at the rear of the site are Grade II listed, with their significance deriving from their traditional timber framed, weatherboarded construction and their origins in the 16th Century. Although their original purpose is uncertain, they are of a similar era to the historic public house. Consequently, their relationship with the NDHA is an important aspect of their setting. Although they are in poor condition, their age and traditional detailing can be appreciated, and they are a distinctive feature within this part of the CA.
8. There are additional listed buildings along Vine Street, the closest being Dixon House next to the appeal site and Bucks House opposite.

Effect of Development on Heritage Assets

9. The Council has not alleged any harm to heritage assets as a result of the scale or position of the new extension, and nor has any objection been raised to the use of largely glazed, bifold doors to the elevations. The level of glazing and exposed steel frame give the extension an honestly contemporary appearance, while its low, single storey scale is subservient to the host building, so that the detailing of the upper floors can still be appreciated. The uPVC roof lanterns are, however, a prominent feature projecting above the flat roof. Their white frames contrast starkly with the otherwise black and dark grey finish of the elevations. The frames are more substantial than the white timber window frames on the upper floor windows and look heavy by comparison.
10. Although the extension is largely screened from the street, it is a prominent feature within the car park and from the PROW. When approaching Vine Street along the PROW, from the open land beyond the site, the extension is framed between the ancillary buildings and the fence enclosing the beer garden. The PROW is also slightly elevated here, which opens up a clear view of the projecting roof lanterns. Consequently, they detract from the significance of the NDHA by introducing an inappropriate and visually intrusive feature which draws the eye and detracts from the detailing of the building as a whole.
11. That is, in turn, harmful to the character and appearance of the CA, in the context of the important contribution which authentic, vernacular and traditional detailing make to its significance. It also undermines the setting of the ancillary buildings, by detracting from the quality of the detailing at the rear of the public house, where they are best viewed and appreciated.

12. Faux weatherboard is used on a small proportion of the external elevations. The material deployed has a matte finish, in black, with woodgrain-effect texture. The flat horizontal boards lack the feather-edged profile of traditional timber weatherboarding, and they are more regular in appearance. Nevertheless, the dark, boarded finish reflects the detailing and materials of the ancillary buildings and does not attract attention or look noticeably inauthentic. While the use of inauthentic materials within a CA is generally to be avoided, in the specific context of the otherwise glazed, modern extension, the way that this material is used on a minor proportion of the elevations, within a more serviceable part of the site, does not detract to any harmful extent from the character and appearance of the CA, the significance of the NDHA or the setting of the nearby listed buildings.
13. Dixon House is on the opposite side of the vehicular access and the extension can only be seen in conjunction with its more serviceable rear elevation. The setting of the listed building within the main built-up frontage is unaffected, as is the relationship between the NDHA and other listed buildings along Vine Street.
14. Darker frames to the roof lanterns would be less intrusive in the context of the dark grey and black finishes on the rest of the extension. The appellant alludes to products capable of achieving a darker finish, with at least a 10-year guarantee. However, the extension is elsewhere described as having a 20-year life expectancy, in which case the quality of any such finish could deteriorate and not be a permanently effective solution. Even if a suitably long-lasting and weather-proof finish could be applied, the thicker proportions of the frames is a factor in their heavy-looking appearance and draws attention to the use of inappropriately inauthentic materials. Therefore, the harm arising from the development would not be adequately mitigated by a condition to that effect.
15. The extension replaced an outdoor seating area with low wall, picket fencing, movable furniture and lightweight translucent roof canopy. However, the extension is more solidly built than those earlier features and is likely to be a feature of the site for many years. Therefore, the net effect on the appearance of the building is detrimental, even if these previous features are taken into account.
16. In conclusion, as a result of the external materials used for the roof lanterns in particular, the extension has a harmful effect on the significance of designated heritage assets, namely the CA and the Grade II listed ancillary buildings, and also on the significance of the Vine PH, which is a non-designated heritage asset. Consequently, it is contrary to Policy SP7 of the Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2033 Section 1, adopted 2021 and Policies LPP1, LPP47, LPP52, LPP53 and LPP57 of the Section 2 Local Plan adopted 2022. Amongst other things, these policies include a range of criteria to ensure that development avoids detriment to the historic environment, through preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas, including buildings within the designated area and the setting of heritage assets, with a requirement for use of high-quality materials and finishes.

Heritage Balance

17. Taking account of the limited scale of the extension and roof lanterns, the harm to designated heritage assets is less than substantial. Nevertheless, I have attached considerable importance and weight to the desirability of avoiding such harm, in accordance with Section 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

18. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. Paragraph 216 also advocates that a balanced approach should be taken where harm would arise to the significance of a NDHA, having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset.
19. The Vine PH provides a valued community facility and the continued use of the site as a public house over hundreds of years contributes to the significance of the heritage assets. The glazed extension provides an additional seating and dining area, enclosing a previous outdoor space and increasing the capacity of the building for use in all weathers. The benefit to ongoing provision of hospitality on the site therefore weighs in favour of the development.
20. The listed ancillary buildings are in a dilapidated state and the appellant expresses an intention to invest proceeds of the business in upgrading them. However, no mechanism is proposed to secure such investment as a consequence of this development, so that can be given only very limited weight. The extension does not appear to undermine suitable access to the site and compliance with other regulatory regimes is outside the scope of this appeal. However, those are neutral factors weighing neither for nor against the development.
21. Since the Council did not allege any harm arising from the principle or scale of the extension, it may be that the harm arising from the roof lanterns could be addressed through further alterations. Indeed, the Council's evidence indicates that this was raised with the appellant before the application was determined. Any such measures would be a matter for the parties to resolve and are not a matter for this appeal. In those circumstances, there would also be continued uncertainty and ongoing disruption to the continuity of the business. However, since the harm arises from only one particular element of the extension, the evidence does not clearly demonstrate that the extended facilities would be permanently at risk, or that the viability of the business as a whole would be in jeopardy.
22. That being the case, while I have had regard to the benefits of the development to the public house and its community function, in the particular circumstances of this case, the public benefits do not outweigh the considerable weight attached to the harm to designated heritage assets or the harm to the significance of the NDHA.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

Jane Smith

INSPECTOR