
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 February 2025

by **Helen Hockenhull BA (Hons) B.PI MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M4320/W/24/3352808

2 Crown Buildings , Liverpool Road, Southport, PR8 3BY

- 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 K Visvanathan against the decision of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/2024/01364 .
 - The development proposed is Installation of a new shop front and security shutters.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the security shutters. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the new shop front and planning permission is granted for a new shop front at 2 Crown Buildings, Southport, PR8 3BY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/2024/01364, and the plans submitted with it, so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr K Visvanathan against Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. This application is the subject of separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The development proposed has already taken place and is therefore retrospective. I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal building forms an existing retail unit located within a terrace of other local shops and commercial premises on the eastern side of Liverpool Road, Southport.
6. The Council raise no concerns in relation to the new shop front and doorway. I agree with this assessment. The reason for refusal relates solely to the external roller shutter and box.
7. Sefton Local Plan Policy EQ2 seeks to ensure that proposals respond positively or enhance the character of the area through the quality of their design. Advice on

shop fronts is provided by the Council in their Shop Fronts Security and Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This requires that roller shutters and the shutter box be installed internally to ensure that no harm is caused to the street scene.

8. In this case, the shutter is external, is dark grey in colour and perforated in the middle and solid to the upper and lower levels.
9. The appellant has provided photographs of the shutter when closed and also at night. These demonstrate that with a light in the shop, the shutter does not appear as a solid structure. Nevertheless, the shutter forms a dominant feature causing harm to the visual impact of the street scene. Its prominence and incongruity is exacerbated by the fact that no other commercial units in the locality have external shutters.
10. I noted on my site visit that the shutter box is fitted with a fascia sign. Whilst this to an extent hides the shutter box, due to its projection forward of the front elevation of the building, the shutter box and sign do not harmonise with the other units in the row. Accordingly, the development has a negative impact on the character of the parade and has an adverse effect on the character of the area.
11. The Council's SPD allows external shutters only in exceptional circumstances. The appellant has argued that the shutter is important to provide security to the shop particularly as there are high value goods being sold and a cash machine. I recognise the need for security, and I note that external cameras have been erected. However, the potential for crime does not form an exceptional circumstance, as it is an issue for all commercial premises. It does not justify an external shutter. In addition, I have been provided with no evidence that an internal shutter could not be installed.
12. The appellant has offered to provide a timber shop fascia board to match the other units in the parade should the appeal be allowed. Whilst this would be an improvement to that erected, it does not address the projection of the shutter box and its impact on the visual amenity of the area.
13. In conclusion, whilst I find that the new shop front is acceptable, the roller shutter and box have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. This element of the proposal fails to comply with Policy EQ2 of the Sefton Local Plan and the Shop Fronts Security and Signage SPD.

Conclusion

14. I have found that the shop front would be acceptable however the security shutter and box cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. From the submitted photographs and my site visit, it appears that the two elements are physically severable. Accordingly, I consider that a split decision is appropriate in this case. As the shop front has been completed, no conditions are necessary.
15. In conclusion, for the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal in relation to the security shutter is dismissed and the appeal in relation to the shop front is allowed.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR