



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 March 2025

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J0540/W/24/3355213

Marcus House, English Street, Millfield, Peterborough PE1 2LD

- 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 Profectus Holdings Limited against the decision of Peterborough City Council.
- The application Ref is 24/00406/FUL.
- The development proposed is described on the application form as “extensions and alterations to existing building including change of use to aparthotel”.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's decision notice describes the proposed development as “erection of extensions and alterations to existing building to form a four and two storey building, including a change of use to from 23x self-contained 'aparthotel' C1 including associated works to form 20x parking spaces, cycle parking and bin storage”. This is more detailed than the application form description shown in the banner heading above.
3. However, it is clear from the plans that the proposed development would have no more than three floors and be no taller than three storeys. Therefore, the Council's description is incorrect. There also appears to be a typographical error at “change of use to from 23x self-contained” which does not make sense. Given that the phrase “to form” is used in two other places in the description, it is reasonable to deduce that the word “from” should in fact read “form”.
4. A more appropriate description would be “erection of extensions and alterations to existing building to form a part three and part two storey building, including a change of use to form 23x self-contained 'aparthotel' C1 including associated works to form 20x parking spaces, cycle parking and bin storage”. Although public consultation took place based on the Council's description, I do not consider that this amended description would prejudice any party as it refers to fewer storeys, and the plans remain the same. Therefore, I have proceeded on this basis.

Main Issue

5. The Council's reason for refusal includes reference to the adverse overbearing impact on neighbouring properties. However, in its appeal statement, the Council has indicated that it is not pursuing an argument against the proposal in terms of the effect on living conditions, and that its concerns relate to design matters.

6. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site contains an existing L-shaped building on the corner of Bourges Boulevard and English Street. It is two storeys along the Bourges Boulevard elevation and then steps down to single storey along English Street. The building dates from the latter part of the 20th century. The ground floor is faced with red bricks that extend up to the first floor windows with a narrow band of render between these windows. The hipped roof above the two storey element is shallow while the single storey element has a steeper hipped roof. There is parking and amenity space behind the building which is accessible via English Street.
8. The surrounding area is characterised by numerous streets of terraced or semi-detached housing dating from the late 19th or early 20th centuries. The east side of Bourges Boulevard on which the site is located has a strong linear character resulting from these two storey properties. English Street acts more like a connecting road, but this character continues into streets like Clarence Road immediately to the east of the site. There is general uniformity of architectural features and few examples of dormer windows, particularly facing onto the street.
9. There are some larger standalone buildings in the vicinity, including the Mosque further along English Street and the Gladstone Park Community Centre and Primary Academy on the west side of Bourges Boulevard but these do not diminish the overall consistency of scale. While the appeal building has limited architectural merit, it sits comfortably into the street scene due to its overall size.
10. A previous scheme for this site was dismissed at appeal¹ in June 2023. It proposed increasing the height of the two storey element to three storeys and the single storey element to two storeys with roof space above. The Inspector considered that the building would be a dominant form on this prominent corner plot and that its overall scale, height and form would not sit comfortably between more modest scale dwellings where it would appear abrupt and imposing. The proximity of large buildings such as the Mosque were considered to be separate and different, whereas the proposal would have appeared incongruous and contrasted sharply with the existing rhythm of the street scene and in some views.
11. The appeal proposal here would be over 1 metre shorter in ridge and eaves height on both the Bourges Boulevard and English Street elevations. The second floor or third storey of accommodation would now be located within the roof space along these elevations with a series of dormer windows on the eaves line. The new two storey element further along English Street would be similar in height to the previous scheme. There would still be a full three storey tall section on part of the rear elevation, but this would face away from the two roads.
12. The height of the extended building would not be dissimilar to a two or three storey house. However, the proposal would still be significantly taller than the existing building with an additional section of brick and render above the first floor windows on the Bourges Boulevard and English Street elevations and a much larger roof than existing. It would be noticeably taller than the properties to either side of Bourges Boulevard compared to the existing building. The existence of larger

¹ APP/J0540/W/22/3308905

buildings nearby does not justify the proposed enlargement given the negative effect it would have on the street scene looking along Bourges Boulevard in particular, exacerbated by the site's corner location.

13. While dormer windows exist on relatively new development elsewhere in the city, including in locations where such features are not commonplace, their use in the proposal would complicate the design and not be characteristic for this area. Taken as a whole, the proposal would be overly bulky and out of keeping within the street scene and the established pattern of development. Thus, it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area due to its dominant form and incongruous design.
14. The proposal would make a more efficient and effective use of land by reconfiguring the existing layout and providing additional habitable space. It would provide additional aparthotel accommodation near to the city centre and train station with kitchen facilities for each unit. The building would also be refurbished and brought up to modern standards. There would be social and economic benefits as a result which carries moderate weight in favour of the proposal.
15. The removal of existing landscaping to improve natural surveillance of the street could be carried out without the need for this proposal. The replacement planting would occupy the same space. While the details would be secured by condition, there is little information before me to conclude that it would be of high quality. Thus, landscaping and surveillance matters carry little weight in favour.
16. Despite the above benefits, they would be insufficient to outweigh the harm to character and appearance that I have identified. Therefore, the proposal would not accord with Policy LP16(a) of the Peterborough Local Plan 2019 which, amongst other things, requires proposals to respect the context of the site and surrounding area including local patterns of development and existing views.
17. The proposal would also not accord with paragraphs 135 and 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework and paragraphs 41-43 of the National Design Guide which require development to be sympathetic to local character and context, integrate with its surroundings, and reflect design guidance and policies.

Other Matters

18. Interested parties have raised various concerns including safety issues relating to parking and the existing use of the building. However, due to my findings on the main issue, it has not been necessary to address these matters further.

Conclusion

19. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR