



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 March 2025

by **Megan Thomas K.C.** Barrister-at-Law

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P3610/W/24/3355930

3 Station Approach, Stoneleigh, Surrey KT19 0QZ

- 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 Mrs Zhenna Cai against the decision of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.
 - The application ref. is 24/00748/FUL.
 - The development sought is alterations to front and back elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. At the time of my site visit, the development sought had already taken place. This has not affected my decision-making approach and I have treated the appeal on its own merits.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and wider area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is on the north side of Station Approach to Stoneleigh railway station. It is a mid-terrace, three storey building. The appeal relates to the ground floor unit. The surrounding development is typically retail units at ground floor level and residential units on the upper floors. There is a church and church centre on the south side of Station Approach opposite the appeal site. The entrance to the station is close, next to no.1 Station Approach. The site is located in the built-up area of Stoneleigh.
5. Prior approval under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 was granted by the Council on 3 August 2021 for the change of use of the ground floor unit of the appeal site from retail (use class E) to residential (use class C3). There were approved plans accompanying the prior approval (ref: 21/00553/PDCOU). The change of use included an alteration of the shop front to reduce the size of the windows with the lower area having a brickwork plinth in place of glass. The approved plans retained the full width windows in the front, other than the insertion of a further door in the front elevation adjacent to the existing door giving access to upper units.
6. In order to further maintain the character of a shop front the approved plans retained the highlight windows along the top of the shop frontage. The brickwork was specified as “to match existing”. At the rear the approved plan included the addition of some brickwork under a new window. It retained an external door but in a slightly different position.

7. Works not in accordance with the approved plans have taken place. The front elevation ground floor retains the door giving access to upper units and other than a small window and new second door with a glass pane above, it is faced with brick. At the rear there is no door and two escape windows.
8. The focus of the appeal is the ground floor front elevation. The surrounding character of the ground floor units is that of retail units with typically shop-type windows which allow display of items for sale. The development which has taken place includes only a relatively small dwelling-type window and a door with a top light. The face of the building is predominantly that of red brickwork which is in marked contrast to the brickwork in the floors above and to the sides, which is bricks of assorted brown, black and terracotta colours.
9. As a result, the approved front elevation which sought to improve privacy and to continue to reflect the surrounding retail uses has not been achieved. Furthermore, the new, mono-coloured bricks present a discordant and prominent face to the building which unduly draws the eye. The contrast with the other shop fronts is disharmonious. The loss of the highlight windows which were retained on the approved plans also detracts from the consistent shopfront type appearance in the row of shops.
10. I therefore conclude that the development unduly harms the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area from the front, and is contrary to policy CS5 of the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy 2007 and policies DM9 and DM10 of the Epsom and Ewell Development Management Policies Document 2015.
11. I have borne in mind that the standard window now installed is likely to be reducing heating loss, saving energy, increasing privacy and ventilation and reducing noise, compared to the approved windows at the front. I also note that the applicant was not able to find a suitable matching brick after the pandemic. However, those factors do not outweigh the harm I have identified above.

Conclusion

12. Having considered all representations made, for the reasons given above, I dismiss the appeal.

Megan Thomas K.C.
Inspector