
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 March 2025

by **Lewis Condé BSc, MSc, MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/W/24/3350515

95 - 98 High Street, Lowestoft NR32 1XW

- 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 E Top against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/23/4149/FUL.
 - The development proposed is new aluminium doors to replace unsecure and damaged timber doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for new aluminium doors to replace unsecure and damaged timber doors, at 95 - 98 High Street, Lowestoft, NR32 1XW in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/23/4149/FUL, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted relates to the following drawing nos:
 - Location and Block Plan, Ref: 186HS_100, Dated October 2023; and
 - Plans and Elevations as Existing and Proposed, Ref: 186HS_101, Dated October 2023.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the original planning application form and the Council's decision notice. However, I have removed the term 'Retrospective' as this is not a description of development.
3. The development to which the appeal relates has already been complete and was visible at the time of my site visit. I have though determined the appeal in line with the submitted plans. Should there be any discrepancies between these, and the development undertaken, it would be a matter for the main parties to address, if necessary.
4. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024. In respect of matters of pertinence to the appeal scheme, there have been no fundamental changes to national policy. As such, comments were not sought from main parties in relation to the updated Framework.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host property and the North Lowestoft Conservations Area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is located within the North Lowestoft Conservation Area (the NLCA). The NLCA largely overlaps with the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone, an area that since 2018, Historic England in partnership with the Council and other stakeholders, embarked on a five-year programme of projects focused on heritage assets to regenerate the area.
7. The NLCA covers a sizeable area of the town centre, including much of its surviving historic core and the area's finest buildings, that range in date but largely consist of buildings from the Edwardian and Victorian periods.
8. I find that the significance of the NLCA, therefore mainly stems from its historic role in the commercial development of Lowestoft, its architectural interest, as well as its reflection of the town's historic layout and street pattern.
9. In so far as it relates to the appeal proposal, it is the architectural interest of the NLCA that is most noteworthy. High Street is particularly important in this regard as it contains several notable buildings and a variety of architectural styles, many of which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
10. Still, from my observations, a considerable number of historic shopfronts along the High Street, and within the NLCA, have been subject to alterations or have been replaced with modern designs of varying quality. This includes shopfronts that display different materials and considerable variation in detailing and proportions. Additionally, it appeared likely that several shopfronts within the NLCA have been entirely lost through conversion of the relevant buildings to other uses.
11. The appeal property's shopfront spans three buildings. From the evidence before me, the original shopfronts to these buildings have been significantly altered in the past. The current shopfront, likely dates to the late 1990s and has a mock Victorian character. This is due to its inclusion of traditional features, such as, pilasters, stallrisers and window transoms. Although not containing an original shopfront, the appeal property displays an attractive frontage and positively contributes to the streetscene, as well as the character and appearance of the NLCA.
12. Through their materiality and detailing, the previous timber doors emulated elements that would have been found in Victorian era shopfronts. They would also have likely offered a greater sense of symmetry than the current proposal, through tying in with features such as the stallrisers and multi-pane transoms that are present on the wider shopfront of the host property.
13. Nonetheless, despite displaying various traditional detailing, the appeal property's shopfront is clearly not original and has a somewhat modern appearance. This is in part due to its scale, the extent and arrangement of glazing and its considerable sized fascia. The installed doors, for which permission is sought, display clean, simple proportions and are rather discrete in nature due to being recessed. The finished colour of the replacement doors has also been colour matched to the wider shopfront.
14. The appeal doors are more modern in appearance and contain less thorough detailing, than those they replaced. Despite this, they still have a sense of cohesion with the remainder of the shopfront, such that I do not consider them to

detract from the character and appearance of the host property nor the surrounding NLCA.

15. Accordingly, I find that the appeal scheme preserves the character and appearance of the NLCA and would not harm its significance. It therefore complies with the requirements of Policies WLP2.9 and WLP8.39 of the East Suffolk (Waveney) Local Plan (adopted 2019) and the overall aims of the Council's Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document (adopted 2021). Together, amongst other matters, these policies and guidance seek to promote development that respects historic character, including changes to shopfronts, and that development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of conservation areas.

Conditions

16. As the development has already been complete, it is not necessary to impose a standard time limit condition for its commencement. I have though attached a condition specifying the approved plans for clarity and certainty.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons outlined above, having regard to the development plan as a whole and to all other material considerations, the appeal is allowed.

Lewis Condé

INSPECTOR