



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 March 2025

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/24/3350461

14 St. Marys Street & 21 Old Bridge Street, TRURO, TR1 2AF

- 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 M Pooley of Rannji Developments Limited against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA23/09678.
 - The development proposed is described as the retention of conservation UPVC double-glazed windows and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The windows are already in situ, and I made my assessment on that basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with reference to the Truro Conservation Area (the TCA) and the setting of the Grade I listed building Truro Cathedral.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a large, former office building, now converted to flats, within the TCA, with frontages on to St Marys Street and Old Bridge Street. Across Old Bridge Street it is directly opposite and within the immediate proximity of Truro Cathedral. I must therefore pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the TCA and I am also required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the cathedral.
5. The significance of the TCA is multifaceted, but it is dominated in this area by the 19th Century cathedral, set amongst good examples of high Victorian architecture within a medieval street system. The Truro Conservation Area Appraisal (the TCAA) notes that the TCA is unified by an overriding sense of quality in its materials. The cathedral where it faces the appeal building is formed of extremely high quality, sumptuous, dressed stonework and intricate tracery window detailing.
6. I understand that the appeal building was previously used on an ecclesiastical basis, with a direct link to the cathedral through Bishop Wilkinson, as evidenced by a cross which sits above its porch facing St Marys Street. This detailing is consistent with the relatively refined religious character found in and around the cathedral. In addition, the building's historic form and traditional fenestration and materials, such as timber windows, lead it to make a positive contribution to the significance of the TCA and the significance Truro Cathedral draws from its setting.

7. Several poor modern interventions have eroded the quality of the TCA, particularly in this area, ranging from replacement materials to entire, poorly designed 20th century buildings. However, inappropriate development in the TCA is not a persuasive justification for further degradation of this historic environment. Rather, the TCAA states that the integrity, survival, completeness and character of the TCA is threatened by incremental loss, such as through the replacement of windows. Moreover, in this case, whilst I have no reason to doubt the diminished state of the windows that have been removed, justifying a need to remove degraded historic windows does not also serve to justify the windows that then replace them.
8. Aside for being formed in a material which lacks historic integrity, the new windows have obviously contrived elements, such as bulky storm seals and imitation glazing bars set within the glass. Whilst seeking to mimic sash windows, the windows do not appear to open vertically, but have fan type mechanisms, which would lead the windows to be especially incongruous when open. Given the immediate proximity of the appeal building to the public realm, the poor detailing of the new windows is easily discernible to the passing public, and they jar with the otherwise high quality of the immediate historic environment especially the cathedral itself. Consequently, the windows have led to less than substantial harm to the TCA and the significance that Truro Cathedral derives from its setting.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, and that decision makers must weigh any less than substantial harm to such assets against the public benefits of the scheme. Here that balancing exercise must take place in the context of s.66 and s.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which set a strong presumption against a grant of permission for development that causes harm to the setting of a listed building and/or fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area.
10. The proposal has likely improved the energy efficiency of the building and, with the double glazing, protected residents from outside noise sources, notably the cathedral bells and a nearby late-night venue. However, these are limited benefits, and it is not demonstrated that they could not alternatively be achieved with a more appropriate form of window design. They therefore fall well short of overcoming the great weight that I ascribe to the TCA's and the cathedral's conservation. My attention is drawn to an allowed appeal for uPVC windows in the Redruth Conservation Area. Given that this relates to a different conservation area in a different settlement, it has had limited influence on my assessment.
11. Accordingly, the proposal has had an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area, with reference to the TCA and the setting of Truro Cathedral. It conflicts with the heritage and design objectives of Policies 12 and 24 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010–2030 (adopted 2016), Policy C1 of the Truro and Kenwyn Neighbourhood Plan (made 2016, revised 2023), and Policy C1 of the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (adopted 2023).
12. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the other considerations do not indicate that I should make a decision other than in accordance with the plan. Given such, the appeal should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones

INSPECTOR