



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 13 June 2025

by **H Marriott MPlan MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/25/3361651

52 Earls Street, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2AD

- 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 Aras Hussain against the decision of Breckland Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/2024/1134/FMIN.
 - The development proposed is for alterations to front elevation to facilitate installation of roller shutter with external box.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There are two appeals on this site. This decision relates to the refusal of planning permission for alterations to the front elevation of the building including the installation of a roller shutter and external box. The other is against the refusal of advertisement consent for the display of adverts¹. Since the descriptions differ and each requires consideration under separate legislation, I have dealt with each appeal in two separate decisions.
3. In considering whether to grant planning permission, I have been mindful of my statutory duties under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
4. The application form states that the proposed development has been completed on site. I also observed this for myself during my site visit.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Thetford Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

6. The CA designation encapsulates Thetford town centre and the roads radiating out from it. It also encompasses Thetford Priory and a number of open spaces including Castle Meadow and park. The Thetford Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2024) (the Appraisal) confirms that the special interest of the CA is derived from its buildings, which reflect the town's ecclesiastical prominence during the tenth and eleventh century onwards, the industries which developed and

¹ Appeal ref: APP/F2605/H/25/3361648

subsequent development. Significance is also derived from the variety of materials within building facades which include brick, chalk and medieval stone from former monastery buildings as well as flint. Consequently, the age and quality of its architecture and the use of traditional materials are among the important components that contribute to the significance and special interest of the CA as a whole.

7. The appeal site, 52 Earls Street (No 52) is a mid-terrace property containing a shop with a recessed doorway at ground floor level and residential accommodation above. The terrace has a distinctive steeply pitched roof with a three-storey gable feature, various bay windows, arched doorways and decorative red brick detailing on its façade and is a focal point at the junction of Earls Street and Norwich Road. The drawing of the elevation prior to works, illustrates that No 52 previously benefitted from a traditional shopfront design (the historic shopfront). The character of this part of the CA is in part formed by the architectural quality and relationship of the terrace with the street and it therefore contributes positively to the significance of the CA.
8. The Appraisal seeks to preserve original features or good quality later additions to shopfronts and sets out a number of recommendations for shopfronts in the CA. In particular, it advises that external roller shutters will not be acceptable and that any security features should be sympathetic to the historic appearance of the area. The front elevation of No 52, and the development subject of this appeal, is highly visible in views from the street due to its projection forward of the historic shopfront. The external box and frame constructed from powder coated metal in a black glossy finish is contemporary in appearance and contrasts with the traditional materials used on the front elevation of the terrace. It also obscures the historic shopfront representing an uncharacteristic addition to the terrace. When the roller shutter is closed, it would further obscure the historic shopfront. This does not create a high-quality shopfront appropriately designed for the age of the terrace in which it is located, contrary to the guidance in the Appraisal.
9. The factors highlighted above erode the architectural quality of No 52 and the terrace within which it sits. This diminishes the positive contribution that No 52 makes to the significance of the CA. Overall, the development fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA and would fail to accord with the statutory presumption under s72(1) of the Act. Given the scale and nature of the proposal, the degree of harm to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
10. The appellant indicates that the roller shutter is required to improve the security of the premises as recent crime statistics indicate that occurrences of vandalism and break-ins are higher in Thetford when compared to the rest of the East of England and the United Kingdom. To an extent the added security can be treated as a public as well as a private benefit. However, there is little evidence to indicate that other solutions could not be used to increase security, for example internal security shutters or toughened glazing. Therefore, the public benefits have modest weight.
11. The Framework indicates great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. I find that the modest public benefits would not be sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm identified, leading to conflict with the historic environment protection policies of the Framework.

12. I conclude that the proposed development would result in a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the CA. In this regard, it would conflict with Policies ENV 07, COM 01 and GEN 02 of the Breckland Local Plan (2023) which require the significance of designated heritage assets to be conserved, or wherever enhanced, for new development to be designed to the highest quality standards and to respect and be sensitive to the character of the surrounding area. For the same reasons, the development conflicts with the guidance contained in the Breckland Design Guide (2024) requiring development to respond positively to the site and its context and contribute to local character.

Other Matter

13. The appeal site is located within the setting of Numbers 3, 5 and 7 Norwich Road, a Grade II Listed early 19th century terrace with a pebble and cut flint façade with gault brick, and a pan tiled roof. In considering whether to grant planning permission, I have been mindful of my statutory duty under Section 66(1) of the Act to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. The potential for the development to impact on this heritage asset has not been raised by the main parties. Having considered the relationship between the appeal site and this asset, I am satisfied that no harm to significance would arise. Even so, this does not alter the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the CA.

Conclusion

14. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

H Marriott

INSPECTOR