



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2025

by **J D Westbrook BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B2355/W/25/3362124

584-586 Bacup Road, Waterfoot, Rossendale, BB4 7HB

- 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 Ms Salma Akram against the decision of Rossendale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/0358
 - The development proposed is new shop front openings and new front elevation mounted panels with new sign boards above openings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The proposed development has been commenced and so the application is of a retrospective nature.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed shop fronts on the character and appearance around Waterfoot Town Centre and Bacup Road in particular.

Reasons

4. The appeal property consists of two adjoining three-storey stone buildings (Nos 584 and 586 Bacup Road). The upper two storeys are given over to flats and the ground floor is currently being renovated to form two retail units. The main section of Waterfoot Town Centre is situated on Bacup Road to the east of its junction with Burnley Road East. To the west of the junction is a mix of commercial and residential properties, including some retail units and a public house. The appeal property is positioned against the River Irwell which flows through the centre of Waterfoot.
5. The prevailing character of Waterfoot centre is one of stone properties, largely two-storey, though with some three-storey buildings. The retail properties have a range of shop front styles and designs, though almost all have shop windows above a low stall riser. Many have fascia boards above the doors and windows. The Co-operative store, almost opposite to the appeal site, is a modern building of non-traditional style and materials which has a full width canopy and which appears as out of character with its surroundings.

6. The appeal property comprises a pair of traditional style, three-storey stone properties. To the west, and attached to the appeal property, are two, two-storey residential properties. All of the buildings have stone door jambs and the original windows had stone lintels and sills, although the windows at Nos 584 and 586 have now been removed and, at the time of my visit, were being replaced with modern doors and windows, that at No 586 already having upvc panelled surrounds.
7. Policy ENV1 of the Rossendale Local Plan indicates that all proposals for new development will be expected to take account of the character and appearance of the local area, including matters relating to design and materials.
8. The Council's Shopfront Design Guide - Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) indicates that the setting of the shopfront is the single most important factor governing scale, height and proportions as well as aspects of detailing. The Council will expect proposals to take into consideration both the streetscape setting of the shopfront, and the architectural setting provided by the host building. In addition, to be acceptable, the design will have to complement its setting from all reasonable viewing angles. In particular, the general arrangement of doors and windows is an important part of the overall shopfront composition, and should always be considered in relation to the overall building frontage.
9. In the context of the immediate surroundings, the appeal property is clearly seen alongside the adjacent residential properties, and the shopfronts should, in my opinion, reflect the main original characteristics of the whole row of properties. These characteristics include a degree of symmetry across and between units; doors with stone pilasters and lintels; windows with stone sills and lintels; and stonework between doors, windows and adjacent properties.
10. In the case of Nos 584 and 586, the doors to the two units are centrally placed, side by side, and now serve the residential properties on the upper floors. I accept that it is, therefore, necessary to create new shop entrances for each unit. However, the proposals show differing designs for each shop unit and this asymmetry would be uncharacteristic. The combined door and window at No 586 would fill the ground floor between the door and the property boundary with a glazed element that would have over-dominant upvc surrounds and no stall riser, and which would have no relieving stonework between the shopfront and the front door. The proposed shop front at No 584 would have a separate door and window element, a low stall riser, and some stonework between the shopfront and the door. It would, however, as proposed, also have over-dominant upvc door and window surrounds.
11. I acknowledge that there are different styles of shopfronts and fascias across the town centre, but in this case, given the visibility of the row in the street scene and the prominent siting of the appeal properties beside the river, it is important that the context of the appeal units along with the adjacent residential properties is respected. The proposed shop fronts would be uncharacteristic and harmful to that context by way of the unsympathetic and dominating design and materials used.
12. The appellant notes that the ground floor of the appeal property has been unused for many years and had been in a dilapidated state. She contends that the proposed new shopfronts would serve local businesses, creating jobs, generating footfall and providing an active frontage in the centre. However, such benefits could also result from new shopfronts that would be more in character with their surroundings and sympathetic to their context.

Conclusion

13. I find that the proposed shopfronts would be harmful to the character and appearance of Waterfoot Town Centre, and Bacup Road in particular, by virtue of use of unsympathetic design and materials. On that basis, they would conflict with Policy ENV1 of the LP, and with guidance on the treatment of shopfronts in the SPD. Accordingly, I dismiss this appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR