
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 August 2025

by **S Brook BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W4325/W/25/3365416

9-9a The Quadrant, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 2EE

- 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 Charlotte Bergman against the decision of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application reference is APP/24/01405.
 - The development proposed is Application of porcelain tiles to ground floor shop front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development has been undertaken. Nevertheless, I have based my decision on the plans before me.
3. The Council's decision notice cited saved policies of the Wirral UDP¹, policies of the Hoylake NP², and the Meols Drive Conservation Area Appraisal. Since the application was determined by the Council, the Wirral Local Plan 2022 – 2040, (LP), was adopted in March 2025. It replaces the Wirral UDP. Further, I am provided with the Meols Drive Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, February 2025, (CAAMP), which also postdates the Council's decision. It is mandatory for me to take account of the most relevant and up to date information in reaching my decision. I have therefore assessed the appeal against the relevant policies in the LP, while considering the guidance in the updated CAAMP. The Council refers these updated documents within its Statement of Case, to which the appellant has had the opportunity to respond. Therefore, I am satisfied that no parties would be prejudiced by this approach.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the building itself, and the area, which includes the Meols Drive Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a three-storey building which forms part of The Quadrant, a series of high quality late 19th and early 20th century commercial, public and civic buildings that stand together in a curved formation along three

¹ Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Including Minerals and Waste Policies), February 2000.

² Hoylake Vision, A Neighbourhood Plan for Hoylake 2015 to 2020.

roads, The Quadrant, Station Road and Market Street. Many of these buildings, including the appeal site, share a consistency in scale and form, materials, utilising mainly red brick, stone and slate, as well as architectural detailing, including numerous gables and substantial chimneystacks. Commercial uses at ground floor level have resulted in some alteration, not all of which is sympathetic to the historic form.

6. As the appeal site lies within the CA, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, as required by section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
7. The CAAMP explains that this CA draws its principal interest as an affluent residential suburb developed between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It recognises that the CA's special interest is formed partly by the institutional and commercial building clusters at gateways to adjoining urban areas, which are described as being of architectural interest in themselves, as well as providing critical legibility to the transition between urban and suburban areas. The Quadrant is highlighted within the CAAMP as a landmark building of considerable influence at the Hoylake gateway, and a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). While not nationally listed, the appeal building is an attractive one, which makes a positive contribution to the strong composition of architectural buildings at this gateway. Consequently, it makes a positive contribution to the significance of the CA.
8. The CAAMP identifies that a fundamental issue affecting the CA is an adhoc loss of detailing and unsympathetic alterations. The CAAMP advises that alterations to existing buildings should conform to traditional materials, and with regards to commercial frontages, shopfronts should not conceal historic stonework. Specifically for this CA, LP policy WP6 requires that new development preserves or enhances the style and variety of buildings and materials linked by a common design approach and retains unifying features.
9. The proposal has introduced coral coloured, 115 x 115mm pillow edged porcelain tiles in a smooth matt finish around the doors and windows of this ground floor shopfront, extending down to the floor and up to the signage. Consequently, those architectural features and original materials at the upper levels of the building remain unaltered. It is apparent that some consideration has been given to the choice and application of the tiles, both in terms of the appearance of the shopfront as a whole, which does demonstrate a cohesive colour palette, and with regards to the colour tones, texture, and dimensions of the building's original materials. The resulting aesthetic has attracted some support.
10. Nevertheless, the porcelain tiles have concealed the historic stonework at ground floor level, a material of high quality, which ties in with the window surrounds of the upper floors of this building, as well as the stone used both at ground floor level and in the upper floors of many of those neighbouring buildings extending onto Station Road, and Market Street. The use of stone within the buildings forming The Quadrant is a common feature to many, and one which adds to the uniformity of this building group, contributing to the quality of The Quadrant as a landmark of the CA. Consequently, the covering over of this stone with a modern tile that is not a traditional material of this, or adjoining buildings, has resulted in an unsympathetic alteration, which fails to respond to the historic form of the host building and adversely impacts its appearance, thereby diminishing its overall

quality as a NDHA. In turn, this negatively impacts on the contribution the building makes to the significance of the CA.

11. I appreciate that the ground floor commercial premises nearby vary in terms of their style and materials, and I have considered the examples provided by the appellant, including where timber boarding has been introduced which conceals stonework, signage of non-traditional materials, and where original brickwork has been painted. Not all changes to these commercial premises have been sensitive ones. Nevertheless, examples of insensitive alterations do not justify further harm to the CA.
12. The modest level of harm to the significance of the CA as a whole would be 'less than substantial' for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which requires that less than substantial harm is balanced against any public benefits. The effect of a proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should also be taken into account, requiring a balanced judgement, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
13. The appellant points to erosion of the original stonework, resulting in water ingress at the premises. I am told that the tiles were applied to provide a remedy, by acting as a waterproof barrier, and I note that the proposal has some support in terms of this function. Maintaining heritage assets in a satisfactory condition is important for their retention, not only to protect the original fabric of the building, but also to improve the likelihood of their continued use, which is in the public interest. However, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that the application of tiles is the only means by which to remedy this issue, or that this is the least harmful option in considering the building itself as a NDHA, and the contribution it makes to the CA. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the identified harm.
14. For the above reasons, I find that the development is harmful to the appearance of the building itself, and the area. The development fails to preserve or enhance the appearance of the CA. The proposal would conflict with LP policies WD2, WD11, WP6, WS6 and WS7, and NP policies DI2 and DI3, which collectively require high quality, well designed development, which preserves or enhances the historic environment, including both conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets, by ensuring that alterations to existing buildings, respond to the distinctiveness of the context by respecting form, mass, materials and character.

Other Matters

15. Two listed buildings are located near to the appeal site, Hoylake Chapel and Hoylake Railway Station, both grade II listed. The former dates from the early 20th century and is a gothic inspired design of red brick and stone construction. Its grounds are relatively confined. The latter dates from 1938, and is of a modernist form, influenced by Charles Holden's designs for London stations. It fronts onto the road, separated by a small car park. Surrounding commercial and residential dwellings, along with the highway and its associated paraphernalia, are an established part of the setting to both of these buildings. Albeit the appeal scheme would be seen in some views towards these buildings, there is no suggestion by the Council that the development harms any significance derived from the setting

of these listed buildings. From the available evidence, I have no reason to disagree.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole, and there are no other material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

S Brook

INSPECTOR