
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 November 2025 by J Reed MPlan

Decision by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/Z/25/3372214

6 Deptford High Street, Lewisham, London SE8 4AF

- 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 Best Butcher against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref is DC/25/139422.
 - The development proposed is described as 'an application to regularise the change of the shopfront. Replace the tired and old shopfront, with one which is more up to date, yet is in keeping with the conservation area.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matter

3. I note that the development has already been undertaken, and I have dealt with the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Deptford High Street and St Paul's Church Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. S72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires when determining proposals in conservation areas that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. At paragraph 210 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), it sets out matters which should be taken into account including sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
6. The CA possesses a vibrant and diverse retail and commercial character. The Council's CA Appraisal and Management Plan (A&MP) notes that the CA contains many historic buildings, some of which are rare because they pre-date 1800.

Victorian buildings and 20th century buildings also help to create a diverse, vibrant high street. Along Deptford High Street, which is a central artery through the CA, I saw that shopfronts are a characteristic feature of the ground floors to properties with a variety of retail uses represented which is considered to be a rare example of a thriving London High Street that retains a great deal of its historic character which is intrinsic to shaping the significance of the CA. Over time, unsympathetic alterations to shop fronts including but not limited to, replacement with modern, signage, windows and removal of traditional features have served to undermine the uniformity and traditional character of Deptford High Street.

7. The appeal site is a ground floor retail unit situated as part of 2-6 Deptford High Street a red brick terrace which generally retains its original architectural detailing. Whilst the appeal site is not listed, it is identified in the A&MP as a positive contributor to the CA.
8. The loss of traditional shopfront elements such as the risers and fanlights which previously helped sustain the historic coherence between the ground floor retail unit and historic buildings above has resulted in a disruptive form of development which has detracted from the broadly cohesive appearance of the appeal site previously. This has been further exacerbated by the introduction of the two large openings with the lack of a defined entrance to the shop creating a modern and incongruous form of development which is read as directly contrasting to the historically sensitive examples in the surrounding CA.
9. Whilst I note the appellant has clarified that appropriately sensitive materials may be used this would not mitigate the harm I have identified in regard to the modern architectural approach. Furthermore, the discordance of the replacement shopfront is particularly noticeable due to its prominent position on Deptford High Street where it is distinctly viewed on the approach from both directions.
10. In reaching this view I am mindful that there are several examples of modern shop fronts along Deptford High Street, which has diminished the period character of the respective buildings at ground floor level. Such examples do not justify the further incremental and harmful erosion of the historic character of the area. I also note that the loss of historic detailing and materials are identified as a negative factor affecting the CA in the A&MP which contains design advice for shopfronts moving forward in order to prevent further erosion to the CA.
11. It is therefore concluded that the development does not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. The development is contrary to Policy HC1 of the London Plan (2021), Policies CSP 15 and CSP 16 of the Core Strategy (2011) and Policies DMP 30, DMP 31 and DMP 36 of the Lewisham Development Management Local Plan (2014) which all seek amongst other things for proposals to be designed to a high standard and make a positive contribution to the designated heritage asset's character, appearance and significance. It also fails to satisfy the requirements of the Act.

Other Matters

12. My attention has also been drawn to a number of shopfront appeals across the country that are adjacent to listed buildings or within conservation areas. Based on the evidence before me, these differ including in terms of their surrounding context and in their respective designs. Therefore, as they are not directly comparable to

the development before me, they do not provide a justification for the appeal, which I have considered on its own merits. I therefore give this limited weight.

13. The appellant has also provided me with various photos of other modern shopfronts in the surrounding area. However, I am not aware of the circumstances of those shop fronts or the policies that applied at the time of their consideration if they do in fact have planning permission. In any event, those that I saw served to confirm that the introduction of modern non-traditional frontages is to the detriment of the character and appearance of the CA and I therefore afford this limited weight.
14. The appellant has outlined various benefits of the development including but not limited to improved hygiene, increasing the viability of the business occupying the unit and the potential for increased employment opportunities as a result of the development. However, it has not been demonstrated how any of these benefits would be achieved. In any event I am not persuaded that these benefits could not also be achieved by a scheme that does not result in harm to the CA.
15. I note the appellants reasons for a larger entranceway to the retail unit in order to provide easy access for those with mobility issues or those with pushchairs. I have considered this in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which sets out the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. I have also had regard to rights conveyed within the Human Rights Act.
16. The improvement of accessibility to the retail unit for those with mobility issues or young children is a matter of significant weight in favour of the appeal. It has not however been demonstrated that a more architecturally sensitive shopfront design that could improve accessibility has been considered. This reduces the weight to be given to such circumstances.
17. It therefore does not follow from the PSED that the appeal should succeed. I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the CA in accordance with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Therefore, whilst I have given weight to these matters, they do not outweigh the harm that would be created were the appeal to be allowed.
18. It has also been highlighted by the appellant that recessed shop fronts such as what had previously been present at the appeal site can result in crimes such as anti-social behaviour or graffiti. However, no evidence has been put before me demonstrating that the appeal site has been affected by any of the crimes highlighted. Also, it has not been demonstrated that the appeal site is especially vulnerable to such crime in comparison to neighbouring units. Furthermore, there is also nothing before me demonstrating how the development would be a preventative measure if said crimes had indeed occurred at the appeal site. As a result, I give this limited weight.
19. The appellant has also provided information highlighting how the development improves the economic viability of the retail unit. However, there is nothing before me to indicate on how this directly translates to the appeal site and therefore, I give this limited weight.

20. The absence of objections from nearby occupiers or customers is a neutral matter which weighs neither in favour, nor against, the development.

Conclusion and Recommendation

21. Having regard to paragraph 202 of the Framework, I find that the harm to the CA is relatively localised and therefore the development causes less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. I do not find that this harm is outweighed by the improvement in accessibility or any other public benefits of the development.
22. The development therefore conflicts with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict.
23. For the reasons set out above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Reed

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

24. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR