



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 7 January 2026

by **Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/H0520/W/25/3359203

66 High Street, Warboys, Cambridgeshire PE28 2TA

- 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 Raju Goraniya against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application Ref is 24/00747/FUL.
- The development proposed is installation of a ramp to the front entrance and internal alterations to create Class E retail/convenience store at ground floor and one residential unit on the first floor.

Appeal B Ref: APP/H0520/Y/25/3359204

66 High Street, Warboys, Cambridgeshire PE28 2TA

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
- The appeal is made by Mr Raju Goraniya against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application Ref is 24/00746/LBC.
- The works proposed are installation of a ramp, bricking up two windows, removal of two internal walls and installation of stud walls, and associated alterations for ground floor Class E unit and first floor residential unit.

Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Applications for costs

3. An application for an award of costs was made by Mr Raju Goraniya against Huntingdonshire District Council. That application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

4. As the proposal is in a conservation area and relates to a listed building I have had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

5. The main issues are whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, "66, High Street" (ref: 1128362), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Warboys Conservation Area.

Reasons

6. Warboys Conservation Area (CA) encompasses the historic core of Warboys along the main road running north past the church and later 19th century eastward expansion. In this regard, High Street is more formal and densely developed than

Church Road and Ramsey Road. The generally symmetrical buildings are sited close to the pavement, with larger houses differentiated from shops and terraces by their set back and gardens to front and rear. I find that the significance of the CA, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to be associated with its well preserved historic buildings and original architectural features which illustrate the economic growth of Warboys in the Victorian era following the draining of the fens.

7. The LB is a mid 19th century house and shop with original shop front. The 2-storey building is finished in Gault brick with a hipped slate roof and saw-tooth eaves cornice, with stone steps to both the house door and shop door. When it was listed in 1982, the shop interior was intact. Although subsequently stripped of its original shop fittings and much historic fabric removed, this was unauthorised. Given the above, I find that the special interest of the LB, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to be associated with its historic and architectural interest as an early shop with shopkeepers' accommodation that illustrates the evolution of commerce and the development of Warboys. The historic fabric, architectural details and legibility of its historic plan form all make important contributions in this regard.
8. As part of the proposal, internal walls would be removed at ground floor level and the stairs would be enclosed by new studwork walls. Irrespective that the stairs and chimney breast would be retained in their original position, there would be a significant loss of historic fabric and the historic plan form would be lost, thereby eroding the historic legibility of the building. The retention of 4 courses of brick in limited areas above RSJs would not ensure that the historic layout remained legible. Even if removed bricks were safely stored, there is little evidence that the internal walls would be rebuilt to restore the historic plan form in future. Other internal works, including changes to floor levels and the treatment of the retained chimney breast are not adequately detailed on the plans.
9. Externally, the blocking up of windows would harm the character and appearance of the LB. The frontage would be altered by the replacement of the shop steps with a ramp that would cover the pavement light well and finish at the house steps. The elevation plan illustrate that the ramp would have a visually and functionally awkward relationship with the historic shopfront, light well and the house steps. The ground floor plan suggest that the house steps would be removed.
10. As illustrated, the concrete ramp would not be high quality design. It would be an inauthentic feature that would be discordant and incongruous in juxtaposition with the historic shop front and the house steps. It would not make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness or sense of place. The ramp, with consequent loss of historic shop steps, would detract from the LB and it would harm the character and appearance of the street scene and thereby the CA.
11. The appellant would be willing to agree a different material finish to soften the appearance of the ramp, but he proposes concrete and does not suggest any alternate materials. His final comments clarify that the ramp would be built over the shop steps and a DPM material would prevent the concrete from bonding with them. Even if the shop steps would be merely encased in concrete rather than removed, this would not mitigate the visual harm.
12. I have considered whether matters relating to ramp materials and construction, as well as internal levels, could be dealt with by the imposition of planning conditions. However, fully detailed plans are necessary to enable a robust assessment of the

proposal and also in the interests of certainty. In the absence of details of any alternate form of ramp, the proposal fails to demonstrate that a theoretical amended scheme would mitigate the harm that I have found. Consequently, this is not a matter that could be addressed by condition.

13. The Conservation Area Character Statement (September 2006) identified No 66 as a notable underused and vacant building, detrimental to the character of the CA. No 66 continues to be unsightly and a sympathetic refurbishment and reuse would be beneficial. However, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is clear that where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the asset should not be taken into account. In this case, the LB has been deliberately damaged and neglected and therefore its poor condition should be discounted.
14. The parties agree that the proposed works would result in less than substantial harm to the LB. From the above it can be seen that I also find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and furthermore it would fail to preserve the significance of the CA. Consequently, I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of these appeals.
15. Paragraph 212 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 advises that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. Given the scale and nature of the proposal, I find the harm to be a moderate level of less than substantial but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
16. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimal viable use.
17. The proposed retail unit and residential accommodation would make a limited contribution to the local economy and the supply of housing. There would be limited economic benefits during the works. The planning application form indicates that there would be no new employment opportunities. These matters carry little weight.
18. A ramp might benefit some persons wishing to enter the shop but, with reference to the Historic England Easy Access to Historic Buildings guidance (EAHB), it could simultaneously disadvantage ambulant disabled persons. Even if it did provide broad access into the LB, the proposal would be an open plan convenience store and its historic function and use would not be legible to visitors. As illustrated, the ramp would be functionally constrained by the house steps such that it is not clear that level access to the street could in any case be achieved. Therefore, ramped access to the LB carries little weight in favour of the scheme.
19. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains that if there is only one viable use of a heritage asset, then that is the optimum viable use. However, if there is a range of alternative economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most economically viable one.

20. Restoring the LB to viable use would be a benefit. However, the proposal would not be sympathetic to the historic interest of the LB and it would compound the harm occasioned by the unauthorised works. There is little evidence in relation to marketing or to demonstrate that there are no viable alternatives that would result in less or no harm to the LB, including the previously approved scheme. While the appellant considers the internal walls must be removed for shop surveillance, there is little evidence this could not be achieved by other means that would still be economically viable. There is also little robust evidence that there are no viable alternatives to the provision of a permanent ramp and loss of historic shop steps.
21. Therefore, while the proposal would be an economically viable use of the LB, it has not been demonstrated that it is the only, and thereby the optimum, viable use for the purposes of the Framework and the PPG. As such, the proposed use carries only modest weight in favour. Collectively, I find there would be public benefits but these are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have found.
22. Given the above, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the Grade II listed building and the character or appearance of the Conservation Area would be neither conserved nor enhanced. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 212 of the Framework and conflict with policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 Adopted May 2019. These seek, among other things, to ensure that proposals are well designed, respond positively to their context, create attractive built frontages to positively enhance the townscape, and protect the significance of heritage assets including by respecting the historic form, fabric and special interest. As a result, the proposal would conflict with the development plan.

Other Matters

23. The EAHB supports broad access to the historic environment through sensitive alterations that have due regard to what it is that makes the building special. It notes that the Equality Act requires service providers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people but does not specify how these obligations should be met. In relation to Victorian houses with front door steps, and where there is inadequate space or a need to protect architectural features, it suggests access could be via alternative entrance points, lifts or portable ramps. It also cautions that where a change of level is greater than 300mm, steps should be provided in addition to a ramp for ease of access by ambulant disabled people. Therefore, the EAHB does not provide a justification for the proposals.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposals would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict.
25. Therefore, I conclude that both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR