
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2017

by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 29th November 2017.

Appeal Ref: APP/A2525/W/17/3180082

5 Merchant Mews, Park Road, Holbeach, Lincs PE12 7EE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mark Edwards against the decision of South Holland District Council.
 - The application Ref H09-0382-17, dated 18 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 30 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as 'replace 3x windows second floor, 1 window rear facing, 2 windows side facing. Windows to be blue wood grain UPVC to match existing design'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether or not the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Holbeach Conservation Area (HCA).

Reasons

3. The appeal building is an imposing three storey linear structure with ornate painted and dentilated part gable feature atop a taller and wider front wall. The brick finish is painted and two pairs of top and side opening contrasting timber windows form the upper two floors. There is some evidence of there having previously been three symmetrical windows to each upper floor. The ground floor features a traditional shop front divided down its centre with a single span painted corniced fascia sign, uniform glazing lights and doors. Given the spacing either side of the appeal building, the side elevations are obviously apparent in the street scene.
4. It is flanked by two other similar buildings. The slightly more ostentatious pink fronted building to the east which has more ornate arch header windows, an inset entrance to the centre of the ground floor and painted arched ribbon detail below the main front gable. The building to the west is of a lower height but utilises a similar traditional shop front and uniform fenestration detail to the others. The use of timber frames predominates. As well as being quality examples in themselves, the commonality of the three buildings gives them a strong group value which thus contributes positively to the character and appearance of the HCA.

5. The upper floors have been subdivided into separate flats. The proposed development seeks to change three of the windows in one of the flats in the second floor to UPVC frames. Two of the new frames would be on the side elevation; one would be to the rear. As I have alluded to above, the side elevations are visible in the street scene.
6. The replacement frames, being UPVC, would be noticeably different to other openings on the appeal building and the others flanking. The appellant proposes to use wood grain effect UPVC in a dark blue colour. This would, to a limited extent at least, resemble the existing windows. However, features such as concealed hinges, wider profile glazing bars and a more sheer external finish overall make them clearly discernible from their timber counterparts. Part of the charm and quality of original timber windows, particularly in traditional buildings in conservation areas, is their sometimes weathered and non-uniform appearance, narrow profile frames and rough putty surrounding the glazing. This can be difficult to replicate with UPVC.
7. With this in mind, the proposed replacements would appear obvious, out of place and not relevant to the building's existing exterior detailing which is in itself far more reflective of its age. UPVC is a modern material and without a doubt has its place. For the reasons I have given however I do not consider that place is on the appeal building. Their incongruous appearance would cause harm to the appeal building and thus the HCA.
8. This harm would be less than substantial and as per paragraph 134 of the Framework, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development. There is no indication of public benefits in the evidence before me although I recognise that there would be some benefit to increasing energy efficiency and thus reducing carbon footprint overall. This would however be limited in the grand scheme. Moreover, I have no detailed information before me which demonstrates the same could not be achieved with modern timber replacements. It seems clear to me therefore that the harm that the proposed development would cause to the HCA would not be outweighed by its benefits.
9. The proposed development would therefore, for the reasons I have set out, fail to either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the HCA. This harm would result in conflict with section 12 of the Framework which, amongst other things, seeks to protect the historic environment from harm.

Other Matters

10. One of the proposed replacement windows would be to the rear of the building and I recognise this would be well screened from public views as a result. This does not to my mind however make it acceptable since it would still have a compromising effect on the historical integrity of the building overall whether it could be obviously seen or not.
11. The appellant also brings to my attention that other buildings have replaced windows with UPVC and in some cases aluminium frames. This has no doubt had an eroding effect on the character and appearance of the HCA where a large number of older buildings still display timber in windows and doors. This being the case, the addition of further uncharacteristic and non-traditional materials would add to this erosion which by definition would not improve the situation. In actual fact, and to my mind, examples such as this strengthens the case to retain original timber where possible.

Conclusion

12. It is for the reasons I have set out above that the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR