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Our Ref: APP/Y3940/W/23/3334553

Wiltshire Council
Planning Appeals
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

29 August 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Appeal by Altogether Care
Site Address: Altogether Care, 62 St. Edmunds Church Street, SALISBURY, SP1 1EQ

I enclose a copy of our Inspector's decision on the above appeal(s).

If you have queries or feedback about the decision or the way we handled the appeal(s), you should submit them using our "Feedback" webpage at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate/about/complaints-procedure.

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Thank you in advance for taking the time to provide us with valuable feedback.

Yours faithfully,

Cassandra Low
Cassandra Low

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The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2024

by Tom Bristow BA MSc MRTPI AssocRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/23/3334553
Altogether Care, 62 St. Edmund's Church Street, Salisbury SP1 1EQ

- 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 Stephen Knell of Altogether Care against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
- The application is ref. PL/2023/07178.
  The development proposed is described on the application form as: 'replacement of timber framed windows, glazing and front door to front elevation with UPVC double glazed units. Replacement of existing UPVC signage with painted render and stencil sign writing.'

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is thereby granted for the development described in the banner heading above at Altogether Care, 62 St. Edmund's Church Street, Salisbury SP1 1EQ, in accordance with the terms of application ref. PL/2023/07178 and the documentation submitted with it, subject to the following condition (necessary to ensure that the development remains as subsequently assessed):

   1) The development hereby permitted shall accord with approved plan no. '10-100 Rev: B'.

Preliminary matters

Statutory and policy context

2. Planning proposals must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.[1] The development plan here includes policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted 20 January 2015, the 'CS'). In summary CS policy CP58 sets out how development should appropriately conserve historic significance. Similarly, recognising that heritage assets are irreplaceable resources, paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (20 December 2023, the 'NPPF'), sets out how 'great weight' should be given to their conservation (relative to their importance).

3. In addition to the NPPF, I have had regard to various other material considerations including the Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG'), the City of Salisbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (published December 2014, the 'CAA'), guidance entitled 'Shopfronts & Advertisement

[1] Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended.

Design' produced by former Salisbury District Council (December 2004, the 'Shopfront Guidance'), and Historic England's guidance of 8 February 2017 entitled 'Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading'.[2]

4. No. 62, whilst not listed, is within the City of Salisbury Conservation Area ('SCA'). The SCA covers an amalgam of designated and non-designated heritage assets and the surroundings in which they are experienced. Their significance is intertwined. Nos. 58 and 60 St. Edmund's Church Street, next to no.62, are grade II listed.[3] There are various other listed buildings nearby,[4] as might be expected amidst a well-preserved medieval grid with buildings from that era and subsequently. I have therefore approached the appeal in the context of sections 72(1) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended.

The development and dispute

5. The application form states that the development was completed by 7 April 2023. Wiltshire Council, however, provided pre-application advice that the commercial frontage at no. 62 should be refurbished or replaced with 'a timber version'.[5] Intentional unauthorised development, and deliberate neglect, are capable of being material.[6] Nevertheless I have not accorded either weight against the scheme. Despite pre-application advice, there is no indication that the development was undertaken in the hope of making permission easier to gain (as opposed to representing what the appellant considered to be a timely improvement to the property in keeping with its surroundings).[7]

6. Moreover, in this instance, the relationship of the commercial frontage in place can be suitably evaluated with reference to what existed previously. There are detailed photographs of its former nature and condition provided in the statements of case of the appellant and Wiltshire Council. I have also, setting that comparison aside, assessed how the commercial frontage or 'shopfront' relates to its surroundings in the present.

7. Wiltshire Council granted advertisement consent in respect of the signage at no. 62 via decision of 26 October 2023, that change representing an improvement relative to the more utilitarian uPVC signage previously in place.[8] Wiltshire Council also, again rationally relative to similar windows being relatively commonplace and of a lesser order of importance relative to changes to the shopfront, did not refuse permission other than in relation to the latter.

[2] Under review in connection with other guidance on adapting historic buildings for energy and carbon efficiency.
[3] List entry no. 1258953.
[4] Including 93-95 St. Edmund's Church Street, list entry no. 1273183, and Taylor's Almshouses (nos 1-7 Bedwin Street) list entry no. 1355849.
[5] Pre-application enquiry ref. ENQ/2022/01943, referred to at paragraph 4.1 of the appellant's statement of case.
[6] With reference to the written ministerial statement of 17 December 2015, official record ref. HCWS423, and to PPG Reference ID: 18a-014-20140723.
[7] Paragraph 8.4 of the appellant's statement of case refers to the appellant's perspective that the replacement frontage is effectively 'a like-for-like' finish.
[8] Ref. PL/2023/07335.

Main issue

8. The main issue is the effect of the development to historic significance.

Reasons

Historic significance

9. No. 62 is a prominent mixed commercial and residential building fronting St. Edmund's Church Street. The latter is to the eastern side of the Salt Lane car park. The car park occupies much of a roughly square block which is otherwise bounded by Salt Lane to the south, Rollestone Street to the west and Bedwin Street to the north. In terms of morphology, much of the centre of Salisbury comprises similar blocks. That reflects a medieval grid pattern or 'chequers' layout. The CAA describes how a number of medieval buildings survive within the chequers: 'these buildings, or remnants of them, are often found behind later facades of brick, render or tile hanging…'.[9]

10. The character, appearance and significance of the SCA is not only, however, reflected in the continuity of its layout or in the materials and craftsmanship embodied in medieval buildings. Instead the SCA reflects an intricate overlay of successive eras of development, redevelopment and changing architectural approaches. The CAA notes how the 'Parson's Chequer', to which no. 62 relates, comprises largely eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings (thereby reflecting a somewhat latter stage in the evolution of Salisbury).

11. Consistent with that history, the list entry for neighbouring nos. 58 and 60, indicates those properties trace their origins to the turn of the eighteenth century. As with many nearby properties, the principal elevations of nos. 58 and 60 are largely of red brick arranged in Flemish bond with arched headers above sash windows. Those features repeat throughout the CA, albeit buildings also occasionally feature infill timber framing or accentuated stonework.[10] Architecture tends to become grander, more formal, and occasionally neo-classical, towards and around Castle Street.

12. Albeit that there is some variety in commercial frontages within the SCA, there is nevertheless a clear predominance of traditional materials and design. The frontage of the Five Bells opposite no. 31 appears high Victorian, that at no.53 Salt Lane appears similarly nineteenth century, albeit more understated, and that no. 14 Endless Street is formed of bay windows. The Shopfront Guidance explains how 'materials traditionally used in Salisbury are wood, glass, brick, stone and brass.' In broad terms the CAA explains how 'the survival of shops, shopfronts and public houses are an important part of the distinct character and vitality of individual chequers'.[11]

13. Therefore, and insofar as relevant to this appeal, the character and appearance of the SCA and nos. 58 and 60, derives principally from a coherence of layout and form, the presence of historic materials and architectural integrity, along

[9] Paragraph 7.7.
[10] As at grade II* listed the Pheasant Inn and Crewe's Hall and at grade II listed Taylor's Almshouses.
[11] Paragraph 7.11.

with a succession of changes over time. In turn those characteristics honestly attest the historic evolution of Salisbury, reflecting in physical form layers of cultural and economic change and significance.

The effect of the development

14. No. 62 is both consistent and inconsistent with prevailing character and appearance. It is broadly of classical proportions as with nos. 58 and 60, contains a shopfront as with other properties dotted around the SCA, and is faced in red brick.

15. The brickwork is, however, clearly modern. It has a heavy 'wave' texture and is arranged in stretcher bond (features suggestive of being late twentieth century). Headers to first and second floor windows appear to be soldier course slips, again recent detailing. Aside from in respect of its commercial frontage, there is no indication that no. 62 as it stands is anything other than authorised. Therefore the contribution of the property, in terms of materials and architecture, to the SCA and setting of listed buildings, is somewhat qualified.

16. The former timber-framed shopfront here was evidently in poor repair at the time the property was purchased by the appellant (2022). Cross-referencing the appellant's intention to create a like-for-like design, as referenced in footnote 7 above, the proportion and spacing of the windows essentially reflects that which existed here previously. Moreover the former shopfront was, in all likelihood, also twentieth century in origin. Whilst there is no evidence before me in respect of its installation, there is no indication that it possessed any meaningful history or significance in its fabric, aesthetic or craftmanship.

17. Whilst visibility and significance are somewhat separate concepts, there is nevertheless some force in the appellant's argument that the proximity of no. 62 to the Salt Lane car park qualifies its contribution to integrity. The two are inevitably seen in conjunction with one another. Unsurprisingly the car park might accurately be described as a functional and comparatively modern element of the built environment. It unsurprisingly features, amongst other things, modern signage, boundary treatments and lighting upstands. It is fair to say that there is a stronger sense of historic integrity at other chequers.

18. As Wiltshire Council aptly reflect, there is also a 'level' of uPVC, and double-glazing, within the SCA. In particular the appellant has drawn my attention to uPVC windows at the Salvation Army building at 6-10 Salt Lane (obliquely opposite no. 62 across the car park).[12] The canted commercial frontage to 31 Salt Lane beyond nos. 58 and 60 also features double-glazed uPVC units.[13] There are furthermore ground floor double glazed uPVC windows, or uPVC or composite doors, at nos. 53 Salt Lane, at nos. 64, 66, 68 and 70 St. Edmund's Church Street, and at no. 8 Rollestone Street. The CAA goes further in describing the use of uPVC windows and doors as 'almost ubiquitous in some of the terraces to the Chequers area of the city'.[14]

[12] Permitted via planning permission ref. S/1998/1813.
[13] At the time of my site visit occupied by Redhouse Residential Estate Agents.
[14] Paragraph 13.2.

19. Nevertheless double glazing in an historic environment, particularly one with a readily appreciable history stretching back to the medieval era, is inherently anachronistic. Double glazing became prevalent only in the mid-to-late twentieth century. A standard approach to double glazing, as has been taken at the shopfront at no. 62, results in a distinctly modern and somewhat cluttered appearance on account of the reflective profile of two panes of glass. That is similarly the case of uPVC or composite. Either is inherently created by mixing materials extracted from wherever they are found globally, and the resultant product being engineered rather than crafted.

20. The Historic England guidance referenced above notes the various potential pitfalls of installing uPVC units within historic buildings, acknowledging that is an oblique reference given that no. 62 is not itself listed. Nonetheless, as is the case here, the frames around glazing panes are chunkier than that which typifies historic craftsmanship, or appears to have been the case in respect of the previous timber-framed shopfront. That lack of finesse is at odds with historic craftsmanship and windows at nos. 58 and 60 (as is also readily apparent at no. 31 Salt Lane).

21. Moreover no. 31 is the sole example of a commercial frontage brought to my attention featuring uPVC units; the other properties referenced above are principally residential, where ground floor windows and doors are less dominant features. In respect of the Salvation Army building, that property does not include what might be described as a traditional commercial frontage. It also appears that uPVC windows there relate, in large part, to a recently-built lobby. Furthermore, the existence of insensitive alterations do not justify further harm to significance; the CAA noting that the ubiquity of uPVC windows 'has significantly eroded the character of some parts of the conservation area.'[15]

22. Consequently the current shopfront cannot be said to be entirely consistent with the character and appearance of the CA as a whole, or to integrate seamlessly with historic integrity. It can only rationally be described as resulting in some harm.

Consideration

23. It is for the decision-taker, however, to gauge the extent of any harm. As detailed in paragraphs 14 to 17 above, there are several moderating factors relevant to no. 62, to the setting of nos. 58 and 60, to the nature of the SCA as a whole, and in respect of the design of the scheme. Moreover a small proportion of the setting of nearby heritage assets and the SCA have been affected.

24. The magnitude of the harm here may therefore fairly be characterised as 'less than substantial' with reference to NPPF paragraph 205. In my view, on account of the foregoing, the extent of harm falls at the very lowest end of a spectrum within that categorisation. NPPF paragraph 208 guides that, in such

[15] Ibid.

circumstances, the extent of harm should be weighed against any public benefits. That is a balance to which I now turn.

The planning balance

25. In short, in the absence of substantive evidence that the public benefits resulting from the remodelling of the shopfront at no.62 could not have been achieved by an approach more sensitive to significance, I cannot accord various public benefits of the scheme more than limited weight (the appellant citing improved energy efficiency, security, and forestalling further deterioration of the windows and property in that regard).

26. However the former shopfront was evidently in a poor state of repair, with windows and doors in need of refurbishment or replacement (borrowing from NPPF paragraph 208, in order to maintain an optimum viable use). That carries some weight in favour of action, noting NPPF paragraph 97.d) accords in-principle support to ensuring that established commercial enterprises are able to 'develop and modernise'.[16] Similarly co-opting heritage terminology, heritage assets are best preserved by being in active use.

27. Alterations to the shopfront were undertaken part-and-parcel of the remodelling of the façade of no.62 and its signage. Therefore, although advertising consent was separately secured for the signage now in place, that cannot rationally be set aside here. The current signage is painted render with stencil sign writing. It is evidently more sensitive to its surroundings in terms of materials, finish and craftsmanship than that which it replaced.[17]

28. Consequently, considered collectively the public benefits of the scheme are sufficient to outweigh the extent of harm that would result (such that it would be fair to describe the scheme as resulting in an overall neutral effect in terms of significance). That amounts, in my view, to 'clear and convincing' justification for the development with reference to NPPF paragraph 206.[18] I therefore conclude that the development complies with the relevant expectations or provisions of statute, of CS policy CP58 and of the NPPF.

Conclusion

29. Having taken account of the development plan as a whole along with all other relevant material considerations, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the condition set out above.

Tom Bristow
INSPECTOR

[16] As above, the CAA also refers to commercial properties being part of the vitality of individual chequers.
[17] Including as shown on supporting plan no. '00-100 Rev: B'.
[18] Irrespective of whether the change to signage is considered as a 'heritage' or rather 'public benefit' (and also irrespective of whether the 'great weight' referred to in NPPF paragraph 2015 were to be applied to either adverse and positive effects individually, or the result of their being balanced relative to each other).