



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 October 2024

by P J Staddon BSc, Dip, MBA (Distinction), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/E3335/D/24/3347922

60 High Street, Wincanton, Somerset BA9 9JF

- 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 Stephen Butt against the decision of Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00414/HOU.
 - The development proposed is 'demolition of existing ground floor conservatory and construction of rear ground and first floor extension. Removal of existing rear render and replacement.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The reason for refusal that appears in Somerset Council's (the Council) decision notice contains an unfortunate typographical error. It is apparent that the word 'no' is missing from the sentence which reads 'There are [no] public benefits associated with the proposal...' The appellant's agent has acknowledged¹ this rather obvious omission and not sought to exploit it. As a result, I do not consider that any matters of unfairness arise. In any event, I must consider the appeal proposal on its own merits.
3. The Council's refusal reason also alleges conflict with the Wincanton Neighbourhood Plan 2018–2028 (made 2018) (WNP), but omits to specify any particular policy. Having reviewed that plan, I consider that 'policy 2' is most relevant and, given that it covers similar considerations to the Local Plan policies stated in the refusal reason, I do not consider that any matters of unfairness arise through this omission.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed extension on the character or appearance of the Wincanton Conservation Area (WCA) and the setting of a nearby listed building.

Reasons

Conservation Area

5. No 60 High Street is an attractive mid C19 townhouse situated on the south side of this historic street that runs through the town centre. It lies within the

¹ Appeal Statement page 12

designated WCA, which covers the historic parts of the town settlement. It is the middle unit in a short terrace of 5 buildings. No 60 and its 2 neighbours to the east (Nos 62 and 64) are 3-storey dwellings, which have a distinctive and cohesive architectural character, derived from their coursed stone front elevations, slated pitched roofs and shared architectural detailing, including ashlar quoins and window dressings, and 4 pane sash windows in a uniform arrangement. The neighbouring properties to the west, Nos 58 and 56, comprise a pair of 2-storey houses, which are Grade II listed and are said² to date to the 'earlier C19'.

6. In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the WCA.
7. The significance of the WCA arises in part from the manner in which it encompasses a range of buildings and spaces that reflect the evolution of this historic market town centre over many centuries, as it grew and prospered due to its location on main coaching and railway routes. This includes the historic townscape of long rows of vernacular development along High Street, which the WCA Appraisal (2010) (WCAA) defines as 'historic corridor streets' which have development on both sides, usually built on the back edge of the pavements. The appeal premises contributes to this historic character and is identified as an 'unlisted building of individual merit' in the WCAA.
8. The appeal proposal does not involve any change to the front (High Street) elevation, but relates to the rear of the property, where there is an existing single storey wing built in stone with a slate covered pitched roof, and an adjoining small lean-to conservatory structure, which is in poor condition. The proposal would remove the conservatory and add an extension which would enlarge the kitchen at ground floor level, and include a smaller first-floor element above, to provide a bathroom. The extension would be of a modern design, with timber clad walls and aluminium framed glazed doors at ground floor level, and an aluminium framed window at first-floor level. The roof above the first-floor element would have a shallow mono-pitch, falling towards the boundary with No 62.
9. I do agree with the appellant's submission that the appeal property is largely appreciated from High Street, and that there would be no impact on its historical significance when viewed in this streetscene. However, that does not render the rear of the premises unimportant, and it must be recognised that the WCA designation covers the entire building and garden areas, and the statutory duty under Section 72(1) still applies.
10. Although there are limited views of the rear of the property, it is visible from a number of vantage points to the south and west. Indeed, on my site inspection, I was able to observe that, whilst there have been modern interventions, including ground floor additions and solar panels added to the roofs (of Nos 62 and 64), the historic character and architectural composition of the rear elevations of the buildings in the terrace remains largely intact, and there is an absence of first-floor additions along this particular row of properties.

² Historic England listing entry reference 1238733

11. Whilst the extension would not be large, its design would be quite out of character and jarring within its historic context. This would be due to its modern design, uncharacteristic roof form, and contrasting materials, which would all be at odds with the prevailing historic character and appearance of this part of the WCA. The first-floor element would be visible from a number of vantage points and would appear discordant and out of place. It would disrupt the architectural composition of the rear elevation of the terrace, masking and not reflecting historic window opening positions and styles, and unbalancing the relative symmetry with its neighbour, No 62, with which the WCAA identifies as a 'pair' of houses of merit.
12. I note the appellant's submissions that distinguishing modern additions from host buildings can be an appropriate design approach, and the content of the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment³, which assesses any impact to be negligible or low. However, for the reasons stated above, I am not persuaded that the specific appeal proposal would be a successful design, or that it would avoid harm to the character or appearance of the WCA, in this particular case.
13. I have also considered the examples of other developments⁴ cited by the appellant, but the circumstances in each case are different, and these examples do not provide a justification for the appeal proposal, which I judge to be harmful to the character and appearance of the WCA.

Listed building

14. Being physically attached to the Grade II listed building at 56/58 High Street means that the appeal premises fall within the setting of this heritage asset. Mindful of the statutory duty set out in Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving that setting.
15. The significance of the building arises from its early C19 origin as a pair of houses and its vernacular architectural detailing. On my site inspection, I determined that the upper parts of the proposed extension would be visible when appreciating the listed building from the south, including from within garden areas. As I have already assessed the addition to be out of character, it follows that its introduction into the setting of the listed building would also be harmful.
16. Being to the rear, and within the more enclosed and private part of the listed building's setting, the negative impact would be localised and limited. It would therefore cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the listed building. Nevertheless, this harm is of considerable importance and weight, and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which are considered below.

Public benefits and planning balance

17. I have noted the appellant's submissions that public benefits will arise from the appeal proposal but, in my assessment, any benefits are largely private in nature. Moreover, there is no convincing evidence to suggest that some of the

³ Heritage Impact Assessment - Winterburn Heritage and Planning - July 2024

⁴ 38 High Street, Wincanton; Barton House, North Street, Chiselborough; and Wassal House, Bayford Hill, Wincanton Road.

claimed benefits, including replacing the cement render with lime render, could not be achieved without the harm that I have identified. In any event, I judge any public benefits to be quite limited, and not of a magnitude that would outweigh the harm that I have assessed.

Conclusion

18. I conclude that the appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the WCA and that it would not preserve, but would harm, the setting of the adjacent listed building at Nos 56/58 High Street. This means that the proposal conflicts with policies EQ2 and EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006–2028 (adopted March 2015) which, amongst other matters, require development to reinforce local distinctiveness, context and character, and conserve and protect heritage assets and their settings.
19. For similar reasons, the proposal further conflicts with the provisions of chapter 16 of the Framework, and with policy 2 of the WNP. There are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict.
20. As a result, the appeal is dismissed.

P. Staddon

INSPECTOR