

NEWBURY 14/01502/FUL Pins Ref 2226883	The Nags Head 91 Bartholomew Street Newbury	Retrospective - Repair of existing rotten window frames with Georgian style upvc windows in a conservation area.	Dele. Refusal	Dismissed 12.6.15
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Procedural Matter

At the time of the Inspector's site visit, the Georgian style UPVC windows had been installed and the appeal was been considered on this basis.

Main Issue

The main issue is the whether the built development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area.

Reasons

The appeal site comprises a traditionally designed public house in Bartholomew Street within the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area. It has an attractive red bricked exterior with darker brick window arches, horizontal feature banding between the ground floor and first floor, and eaves detailing below a slate roof. A white open porch adds to the architectural interest of the building. There are two flat-roofed leaded dormers within the front elevation facing the main road. On the frontage, there are timber sash windows on the ground floor whilst at the first floor and second floor the windows are UPVC Georgian style. At the rear, there are also replacement windows at the first floor of similar design. It is these replacement windows which are considered here under this appeal.

As the site is within a Conservation Area, the Inspector is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area in accordance with the statutory duty under s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area is extensive covering much of the central commercial area of the town as well as residential areas and comprises a variety of new and old development. New development is less architecturally detailed than the older development, being constructed with modern materials, including windows of varying styles and materials. Although some older buildings have also lost their original features, many have retained their original architectural features, including brick surrounds to openings, horizontal banding as well as timber sash windows. By reason of their architectural interest, these older traditional buildings contribute significantly to the varied character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Within the Conservation Area, the Nags Head is an attractive building by reason of its architectural detailing. Despite being located within a street frontage, it has a prominent and focal presence because of its design quality and use. Furthermore, the neighbouring building to the south is stepped back from Nags Head which exposes much of its frontage and flank to views. Much of the rear of the appeal building is also visible from an access road leading to a residential development. For these reasons, it contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

A submitted photograph shows that the original first and second floor windows would have been sliding sash windows. They show the two first floor windows with bottom and top parts to be two paned whilst those at second floor to be three paned. Together with generally slim outer frame and bars, this results in a simple design that is in keeping with the age period of the building and the larger ground floor frontage windows. Although the Inspector had no details showing the original rear first floor windows, there would be a

strong probability that they would also have been timber framed windows of simple design. In summary, these windows would have been attractive features in keeping with the traditional design of the host building.

The replacement windows have a chunkier and modern appearance due to their shinier UPVC material, pivoting sash nature involving outward opening and larger outer frame. They also have bars behind the exterior surface of the glazing. Such a chunky and modern appearance contrasts significantly with the more traditional appearance of the building, including the simpler constructed ground floor frontage windows. Consequently the replacement windows adversely affect the visual quality of the appeal building and its contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Inspector's attention was drawn to a number of other properties along Bartholomew Street, including those above a nearby chemist, which are not timber sash. There are also many other modern style windows. As he had indicated, there are a variety of window types within the Conservation Area. However, he placed significant weight on the architectural interest of the Nags Head and its contribution to the Conservation Area. For reasons already indicated, the replacement windows considerably reduce the host building's design qualities and attractiveness and therefore the scheme fails to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (such as a Conservation Area), this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant has argued that windows provide better heat retention and sound proofing for the building and tenants. The replacement windows are also stated to provide better weather proofing than the old windows which were rotten. Nevertheless, the Inspector was not persuaded that other more traditional designed windows could not have provided similar benefits. Therefore, while the harm to the significance of the Conservation Area is less than substantial, the public benefits would not be sufficient to outweigh that harm.

Accompanying the planning application, a sketch picture of the public house was submitted. It shows different designed windows at the first floor compared to the submitted photograph. By reason of its drawn nature, the window design is difficult to assess and therefore he placed little weight upon it in his assessment. The appellant was not aware of the appeal site's Conservation Area status which is the reason for the retrospective nature of the application. However, the Inspector is duty bound by legislation to assess the development the same as if it had not been built and on its individual planning merits.

In conclusion, the development fails to preserve the character and appearance of the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area for the reasons indicated. Accordingly, the scheme conflicts with Policy CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy, which amongst other matters, requires the conservation and where appropriate, enhancement of heritage assets and their settings.

Conclusion

For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, including support, the Inspector concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.

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