
Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 4/06/18

**gan Declan Beggan BSc (Hons) MSc
DipTP DipMan MRTPI**

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad : 15 Mehefin 2018

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4/06/18

**by Declan Beggan BSc (Hons) MSc DipTP
DipMan MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date : 15 June 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/H6955/D/18/3200782

Site address: Post Office, High Street, Bangor On Dee, Wrexham, LL13 0AU

The Welsh Ministers have transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.

- 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 Mrs Debbie Fell-Groom against the decision of Wrexham County Borough Council.
- The application Ref P/2017/1033, dated 11 December 2017, was refused by notice dated 29 January 2018.
- The development proposed is for the 'installation of new hardwood windows – painted white (in retrospect)'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The address of the appeal site as stated on the planning application form and on the Council's decision notice varies slightly; the description as given on the former and copied into the banner heading above is more concise and it's on this basis that I have determined the appeal. In addition the description of the development subject to this appeal varies between that stated on the planning application form and the Council's decision notice; I have used the latter, as copied into the banner heading above as it is more concise.
3. As detailed in the banner heading above, the windows that are the subject of this appeal have already been fitted.

Main Issue

4. I consider the main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bangor on Dee Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

5. The 'Post Office' is a two storey semi-detached property found within a prominent location in the CA and is believed to date from the early to mid-19th century; it was formally a post office but is now in use as a dwelling. The ground floor windows on the appeal property, prior to the fitting of the new windows, broadly reflected the
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adjacent property to which it is attached in terms of their use of traditional 16 pane timber windows; notwithstanding later additions to other properties, these types of windows, due to their use of materials and broadly consistent design, were distinctive and attractive features within the CA and are replicated on a number of other local properties. At first floor level the previously fitted relatively modern windows which consisted of top hung openings have also been replaced to match those now evident on the ground floor.

6. The appeal property with its slate roof, stone window sills and white rendered walls, along with numerous other properties in the vicinity, makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. The Act¹ requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Planning Policy Wales Edition 9 (PPW) states, there will be a strong presumption against the granting of planning permission for developments which damage the character or appearance of a conservation area or its setting to an unacceptable level.
7. The appellant contends the windows are an improvement to those that previously existed and do not harm the appearance of the area; I disagree. The framing to the windows has a flat engineered appearance that is at odds with the subtle irregularity of other more traditional timber multi-paned windows on adjacent properties which have a characteristic variation in their finish. I appreciate the appellant has attempted to emulate timber sash windows, however their glazing proportions and profile, visually jar with the more traditional multi-paned windows as seen on the ground floor of the property prior to the works being carried out, and as seen elsewhere in the CA. The character of the CA depends, amongst other matters, on individual buildings and their architectural detailing, including windows; window detailing is referred to many times in the Bangor on Dee Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan. The windows as fitted have diminished the architectural and historic qualities of the appeal property to the detriment of both the building's character and appearance, and its contribution to the CA. In arriving at this view I appreciate the first floor windows that previously existed on the property detracted from the architectural quality of the appeal property and the CA, but that does not justify their replacement with another set of windows which have the same broad effect.
8. Whilst it is arguable the detrimental impact of the windows as fitted is relatively minor in comparison to the overall CA, nonetheless small incremental changes of this nature can cumulatively cause unacceptable harm to the CA. The windows would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the CA and therefore are contrary to the Act, and would not accord with policies GDP1 & EC7 of the adopted Wrexham Unitary Development Plan, and guidance contained within PPW which collectively seek to protect visual amenities and heritage assets such as conservation areas.

Other Matters

9. The Appellant extols the energy efficient merits of the windows as fitted and the fact that their design allows more light into the property. I have seen no firm evidence to indicate that the new windows would be any more materially energy efficient than those that previously existed had internal secondary glazing been fitted, or draft proofing or even heavier curtains been utilised to assist in terms of energy efficiency.

¹ The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

I do not consider the windows as fitted allow for any material increase of light into the property than those previously fitted. The windows as fitted do not appear to be necessary to allow for the continued residential occupation of the property. Any perceived benefits are likely to be minor on a local or national scale, and do not outweigh the harm to the heritage asset.

10. The appellant also states that the previously fitted windows were rotten, had become unstable and for safety reasons had to be replaced; in addition it is maintained they did not allow escape from the property in the event of a fire. These issues would not justify the fitting of inappropriate windows within the CA especially when it likely a more appropriate window solution could have been found that could have addressed matters of concern. The appellant states she does not have the resources to replace the windows, however this does not justify their retention; the windows for the reasons previously given are inappropriate within the CA.

Conclusion

11. After taking account of all the evidence before me, and for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.
12. In reaching my decision, I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I consider that this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objective of supporting safe, cohesive and resilient communities.

Declan Beggan

INSPECTOR