

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2017

by **Nicola Davies BA DipTP MRTPI**

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

Decision date: 14 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1445/Z/16/3163110

97 Blatchington Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 3YG

- 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 Omid Taabodi against the decision of Brighton & Hove City Council.
 - The application Ref BH2016/02189, dated 9 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is alteration of existing shopfront.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue raised in respect of the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal premises is located within the Town Centre of Blatchington Road and forms one of a row of commercial premises. The upper storeys of this property comprise projecting window bays and traditional detailing. The ground floor is occupied by a restaurant/café use. The shopfront is of traditional design with a recessed central entrance, panelled stall risers, narrow timber mullions, large window panes with awning canopy and timber fascia above. There is also a recessed access door with fanlight to one side of the shop frontage.
 4. I observed that there are a variety of shopfronts in the area. These vary in length and design and incorporate a range of differing finishes. Also, entrances are both flush and recessed. Interspersed within these are a number of older traditional shopfronts that incorporate recessed entrances.
 5. The proposal would reposition the entrance door to the left side of the shopfront and create a flush window frontage. Although the existing fascia would be retained the alterations to the shopfront would incorporate the replacement with the existing windows with four inward-folding self-coloured anodised aluminium frame window set upon a matching stall riser.
 6. The existing shopfront, with its design and proportions, along with the recessed entrances, is an attractive traditional shopfront that, in its own right, makes a
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- positive contribution to the building. It also contributes to the variety of frontages within this commercial area as the original shopfront is of high quality design.
7. The introduction of a contemporary window frontage set below the traditional fascia would have a contrasting appearance. This mix of traditional elements and modern windows with increased vertical elements would not blend together cohesively and would appear visually odd. The removal of the central recessed entrance and creation of a flush shopfront would also have a modernising effect to the appearance of the shopfront. I therefore conclude that the proposed alterations would be an insensitive change to the shopfront and would significantly diminish its visual design quality and its contribution to the character and appearance of the host building and the wider town centre.
 8. I observed that many of the shopfronts host aluminium frames and are of modern design. This includes that of adjacent shopfronts. However, these changed shopfronts, including that of the Co-Op opposite, do not justify the proposed alteration to this shopfront which makes a valuable contribution to the character and appearance of this commercial centre.
 9. The applicant advises that this existing shopfront was in place before the premises became used as a café. It is also commented that open fronts are typical of cafes and restaurants in Brighton and Hove which have modern shop frontages. Whilst this may be the case, this does not outweigh the important visual contribution traditional shopfronts make toward the attractiveness of town centres.
 10. The Council's Shop Front Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 02 explains that where the existing shopfront is visually unattractive or is in poor physical condition, its replacement can be accepted provided such proposals represent a clear improvement in design quality over the existing shopfront. Although the appellant asserts that the shopfront is in poor condition, it did not appear to me that it was in such a poor condition to require replacement. Furthermore, no substantive evidence has been provided that would indicate that the shopfront is in poor condition that would justify its replacement. Notwithstanding this, I have found that the proposed development does not represent a clear improvement in design quality over that of the existing shop front.
 11. For these reasons I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development would be contrary to Policy QD10 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan which seeks proposed shopfronts to respect the style, properties, detail, colour and materials of the parent building and surrounding shopfronts, amongst other matters. It would also be contrary to SPD02 which seeks the installation of new shopfronts to raise the standard of design quality and to enhance the attractiveness of the city's shopping centres.

Conclusions

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicola Davies

INSPECTOR