
Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 3 September 2014

Site visit made on 3 September 2014

by Peter Rose BA MRTPI DMS MCMi

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

Decision date: 2 October 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/A/14/2218740

Golden Lion, 88 Royal College Street, London NW1 0TH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Norreys Barn Ltd against the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref 2013/4793/P is dated 4 September 2013.
 - The development proposed is change of use from public house (Class A4) with ancillary accommodation to public house and function area at ground and lower ground floors respectively and 4 flats (3 x 2 bedroom/3 person and 1 x 3 bedroom/5 person)(Class C3); erection of a 3 storey extension (at 1st and 2nd floors and within the roofspace) on the Pratt Street frontage; lowering of existing basement by 600mm.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for Costs

2. An application for a partial award of costs has been made by Norreys Barn Ltd against the Council of the London Borough of Camden. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. The Council has stated that, had it still been in a position to do so, it would have refused planning permission for the reasons formally set out in its notice titled 'Notification of decision when an appeal has been made' and dated 25 June 2014.
4. A copy of an agreement made pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and dated 1 September 2014 was submitted to the Hearing. This seeks to address the Council's concerns in relation to local parking conditions and pedestrian safety. I am satisfied that no interests would be prejudiced by having regard to the agreement in this appeal.
5. The appellant submitted revised drawings to the Hearing by email dated 21 July 2014. The drawings indicate a replacement of the previously proposed roller shutters within the Pratt Street frontage by security folding/collapsible doors. I do not consider that the scheme would be so changed by this modification such that any interests would be prejudiced by having regard to these drawings as part of this appeal.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development upon:
 - a) the availability of community facilities in the local area;
 - b) the character and appearance of the host site and surrounding area, with particular regard to the design of the proposed roller shutters/folding doors;
 - c) local parking conditions;
 - d) pedestrian safety.

Reasons

Community facilities

7. The appeal site comprises a late nineteenth century four-storey public house with basement located at the junction of Pratt Street and Royal College Street. The building is of attractive traditional design and is a prominent and imposing feature within the local townscape. The surrounding area is of mixed use and contains buildings of varying forms and quality. The Council identifies the site as a non-designated heritage asset and it is proposed for inclusion within the Council's emerging list of buildings of local interest.
8. The premises comprise a main A4 trading area at ground floor, a function room at first floor, and other ancillary facilities within the basement and at second and third floor levels, including ancillary storage facilities and kitchen, a disused dumbwaiter between floors, and residential accommodation. The building is a purpose-designed, traditional public house and its predominant character arises from that physical form and heritage.
9. The Golden Lion was also designated as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) in December 2013 under the Localism Act, 2011. I note that decision was reviewed and reaffirmed in March 2014. The Localism Act defines an ACV to be an actual current use of a building or other land that is not an ancillary use and which furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community. The definition also requires that it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community. The government's *Community Right to Bid: Non-statutory advice note for local authorities* October 2012 advises that it is open to the local planning authority to decide whether listing as an ACV is a material planning consideration, taking into account all the circumstances of the case. I find the designation to be relevant to the particular circumstances of this appeal and I apportion it a reasonable degree of weight as an indication of the significance of the current use to the local community.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that planning decisions should promote opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other. It further states that decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities such as public houses in order to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

11. London Plan Policy 3.1 states that proposals involving the loss of facilities that meet the needs of particular groups and communities without adequate justification or provision for replacement should be resisted. Policy 3.16 further states that proposals which would result in a loss of social infrastructure in areas of defined need without realistic proposals for reprovision should be resisted. The supporting text to Policy 4.8 of the recent Draft Further Alterations to the London Plan January 2014, whilst of only limited weight, advises that where there is sufficient evidence of need, community asset value and viability in pub use, boroughs are encouraged to bring forward policies to maintain, manage and enhance public houses.
12. Policy CS10 of the London Borough of Camden Core Strategy 2010-2025 Local Development Framework, 2010 (the Core Strategy) seeks to support the retention and enhancement of existing community, leisure and cultural activities. Policy DP15 of the London Borough of Camden Development Policies 2010-2025 Local Development Framework, 2010 (the Development Policies) states that the Council will protect existing community facilities by resisting their loss unless a replacement facility that meets the needs of the local population is provided. The supporting text to DP15 further advises that the Council will resist the loss of local pubs that serve a community role, for example, by providing space for clubs, meetings etc., unless alternative provision is available nearby or it can be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that the premises are no longer economically viable for pub use.
13. The appellant maintains that the proposal is compliant with these policies by seeking to retain an A4 use, and I accept there would, in principle, be no loss of a public house as such. Further, the scheme both acknowledges and responds to a previous appeal decision Ref APP/X5210/A/13/2199667 dated 12 December 2013. This decision related to an application which included conversion of the appeal site into 8 self-contained flats but with no retention of A4 use. The relevant Hearing pre-dated formal designation as an ACV but the decision concluded that The Golden Lion was a local pub that served a local community role and that its somewhat old-fashioned charm appealed to those who go there. The evidence suggested that the premises were popular with and cherished by a good many people as offering something different. I am in no doubt from the strength and depth of support expressed at this further appeal that the public house remains highly valued as an important local community asset, not just in terms of its licensed trade but also as a broader community meeting facility.
14. Nevertheless, all businesses must progress and evolve in order to survive, and the issue is whether the proposals before me take forward the premises without compromising its undoubted value as a community asset. The proposal seeks to retain an A4 use as part of a mixed development of the site involving four self-contained flats and I appreciate that the scheme is packaged to buck the wider trend of public house closures. The scheme would offer significant benefits in terms of A4 use, including improved toilet and kitchen facilities and better access. The appellant also refers to the premises as being dated and in need of renovation and has provided significant expert commercial justification for the detailed form of the A4 accommodation proposed. I have noted that some improvements have been made to the premises in recent years but accept that further upgrading is required.

15. Mere retention of an A4 use, however, would not, in my opinion, be sufficient to satisfy the general expectations of policies broadly seeking to safeguard the community benefits of existing public houses. The extent, configuration and overall quality of the replacement facility are all relevant considerations and, in these regards, I find that the scheme has a number of significant shortcomings.
16. In particular, in order to accommodate a first floor flat, the existing function room at first floor level would be replaced by a facility at basement level. The existing room is of attractive character and provides a relatively open, light space with windows affording outlook across the local area. The replacement facility would be confined to the basement, would have no windows or outlook, and would lose the relative charm of the existing facility. Whilst noting the operational benefits identified, I am not satisfied that the replacement facility would be of comparable quality in terms of community benefit. The previous appeal decision also noted that the existing function room is an important part of the community value of the premises.
17. I am also concerned that, in order to accommodate self-contained access to the upper floor flats and basement and to accommodate incidental storage, part of the main ground floor public trading area, which would form the focus of the commercial operation, would be lost. Whilst facilities such as darts, a piano and a pool table could still theoretically be accommodated, this area is already fairly limited in size and shape and would be further constrained in those regards. Further, the entire premises currently comprise one single A4 planning unit. The proposed scheme would compress the overall extent of the A4 use and would compartmentalise the remaining trading area and function room components into separate, physically confined spaces, thereby losing the wider flexibility and character offered by the existing form and layout.
18. I consider that the sum total of these shortcomings would be to compromise the overall value of the site as a community asset which, in terms of extent, would become a secondary element to the predominant and unrelated use of the site as separate residential accommodation. From the evidence before me, there is a distinction to be drawn between the likely community benefits of the replacement A4 use and the community benefits undoubtedly already conferred by the existing public house. I am not satisfied that the physical composition of the proposed A4 accommodation would be adequate to provide a sustained level of community benefit comparable to the existing facility. In turn, the scheme would carry significant risk in terms of the possible future failure of the site as a community facility and potential loss of the existing community benefits.
19. I have also had regard to the availability of a number of other public houses in the surrounding area. Each public house has a different character and function and I have little basis to conclude that they would offset the particular ambience and community benefits of The Golden Lion.
20. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would compromise and undermine the value of the existing A4 use as a local community facility. Accordingly, the development would be contrary to the underlying aims of Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy, of Policy DP15 of the Development Policies, and to the aims of the London Plan and of the Framework which generally seek to safeguard the community benefits arising from public houses where appropriate.

Character and appearance

21. The Pratt Street elevation is an important feature of the building and of the local townscape. Whilst the building is not statutorily listed, the ground floor element is relatively ornate and comprises a mixture of glazing, timber, tiling and stone with vertical pilasters. The detailed ground floor design forms an integral part of the overall traditional public house elevation and is an important contribution to the distinctiveness of the setting.
22. The scheme would involve points of access within the Pratt Street elevation to be enclosed by either roller shutter doors or by other folding doors. These would appear as relatively random features with contrasting detailed forms and appearance. In either form, this aspect of the scheme would introduce visually discordant elements into an otherwise attractive decorative public house frontage and would fail to respect the wider integrity of the elevation.
23. The Framework advises that, in weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. I find that less than substantial harm would be caused to the non-designated heritage asset but that would not be out-weighed by overall public benefits otherwise arising from the proposal.
24. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of both the host building and the surrounding area. Accordingly, the scheme would be contrary to Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy and to Policies DP24 and DP25 of the Development Policies. These seek, amongst other matters, to promote high quality design, to conserve the Borough's heritage, and to ensure that development has regard to the character of the existing building and its setting. The Framework also places great importance upon high quality design and upon local distinctiveness.

Local parking conditions and pedestrian safety

25. The planning agreement does not overcome the harm identified in terms of the role of the appeal site as a community facility, or the harm arising from the proposed works in terms of character and appearance. Accordingly, it is not necessary to assess the content of the agreement against the relevant tests set out in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 2010 or with regard to accompanying guidance.

Other Matters

26. Whilst there are questions about the general economic plight of public houses, and this was not a matter for detailed consideration as part of the appeal, I note that the existing publican described the public house as a successful operation and it remains a continuing use.
27. Although questions were raised at the Hearing regarding the viability of the proposed A4 arrangement, I noted the responses given and this has not been a determining factor in my decision.
28. General reference was also made at the Hearing to the appellant's own research of local opinion but full and appropriate details were not formally submitted for consideration in accordance with the relevant appeal procedures and timescales and I attach little weight.

29. I have also noted the presence of development sites in the vicinity of the appeal site as indicated in the Council's Site Allocations Development Plan Document, and the possible implications for the scale of change in the local area.
30. Regard has been given to various references to other appeal and planning decisions. Whilst full details of each of those schemes are not before me, the circumstances of each site and of each development will be different, and I am considering the specific planning merits of this particular appeal proposal.
31. The Council raises no objection to the four flats proposed, or to other associated works contained within the application, and has confirmed that the development is otherwise acceptable. The scheme would also make a contribution towards additional local housing and I apportion limited weight as a benefit in favour of the proposals.
32. I have also had regard to the Mayor of London's Revised Early Minor Alterations to the London Plan published on 11 October 2013.
33. A note was passed to me at the end of the Hearing on behalf of an interested third party, Jessica Francis. The note explained her perceived need to leave the Hearing but I do not consider this matter had any bearing upon the evidence presented or upon the planning merits to be considered.
34. None of the other matters raised are of such significance, either individually or collectively, that they would outweigh the considerations that have led to my conclusions on the main issues.

Conclusion

35. For the above reasons, and with regard to all other matters raised, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Peter Rose

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Paul Stinchcombe QC
Carolyn Apcar
Alan Sherman
Phil Briscoe
Peter Lerner
Graeme Bunn
Leo Murphy
Mark Sanderson

Apcar Smith Planning
BuildTech Building Surveyors
Bellenden Community Research
Peter Lerner Consultancy
Fleurets Leisure Property Specialists
The Arizona Group
Heritage Advisory Consultancy

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Jonathan Markwell
Alan Wito

Principal Planning Officer
Senior Planner, Conservation and Design

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Councillor Roger Robinson
Tom Copley
Will Blair

Dale Ingram
Dave Murphy
Shaun Pollard
Pat Logue
James Cantwell
Henry Conlon
Jim Clack
Phillip Stein

Local Councillor
London Assembly Member
Parliamentary Candidate for
Holborn and St Pancras 2015
Planning For Pubs Ltd
Publican, The Golden Lion
Chairman, Save The Golden Lion Committee
Camden Pub Watch
Supporter of The Golden Lion
Supporter of The Golden Lion
Supporter of The Golden Lion
Supporter of The Golden Lion

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT THE HEARING

1. Copies of Hearing notifications
2. Copy of an agreement made under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 dated 1 September 2014
3. Appeal decision APP/X5990/A/14/2215985 dated 8 July 2014 relating to 43 Linhope Street, London NW1 6HL
4. Indicative menu
5. Indicative layouts
6. Floorspace figures
7. Legal Submission by Paul Stinchcombe QC relating to Westminster City Council v SSCLG and Mrs Marilyn Acons [2013] EWHC 690 (Admin)

8. Response of the London Borough of Camden to the appellant's application for costs

9. Undated note from Jessica Francis