
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 December 2024

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/W/24/3348786

Former Milton Hall, 62 Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1BJ

- 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 Quota Ltd against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 20231294.
 - The proposed development is for the replacement of windows and doors to the north elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the replacement of windows and doors to the north elevation at Former Milton Hall, 62 Windmill Street, Gravesend DA12 1BJ in accordance with the terms of the application, reference 20231294, subject to the following conditions:

1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.

2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location plan, 23-1433-10A, 23-1433-11, 23-1433-12, 23-1433-13, window brochure.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounds, including the Upper Windmill Street Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises the former Milton Hall, a detached building on the junction between Windmill Street and South Street. Being in the CA, I have applied the statutory duty in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA by attaching considerable importance and weight to that desirability.
 4. The special architectural and historic interest of the CA derives from buildings principally laid out during the first half of the 19th century, typically of 2-4 storeys in height, some of which are raised above a basement. They are characterised by the use of stock brick, stucco and sash windows, with references to the Classical style. The land rises gradually along the length of Windmill Street to Windmill Hill in the south, with vistas encompassing an aspect of terraces and villas gently climbing up the slopes of the hill.
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5. The Council's Conservation Areas Maintenance/Replacement Windows and Doors Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (2020) states that applications to replace traditional vertical sliding timber windows with standard uPVC units will be refused. The Authority contends that the development is therefore unacceptable as the proposed design and materials would be completely unauthentic and unsympathetic to the age and style of this building.
6. I acknowledge the Council's concerns in this regard, and fully support the Authority's aims in seeking to preserve the character and appearance of the designated CA; in most cases the use of modern materials can be harmful to the overall appearance of an individual building and hence the wider CA.
7. However, notwithstanding these comments, although many buildings may have retained their original features, I saw that number of properties within the vicinity of the appeal site have also been fitted with UPVC windows, for example to the building on the opposite side of South Street. The fact that the appeal building is detached from the adjacent units to the south by external steps, and its north wall is a secondary elevation facing out towards a side street, also helps to make the impact of the scheme less discernible.
8. Moreover, I am informed that the four windows are not original, having been installed in the recesses, which themselves have been altered and infilled, all under application 20040958. As such I appreciate that the scheme would not result in the loss of original openings, as these are not original features on the former Milton Hall. With this combination of factors this in mind, and given their unfussy appearance, I consider that on balance the design of the windows and door and their materials would preserve the character of the CA. Consequently no harm would result to its significance as a heritage asset.
9. I conclude that the proposal would not cause material harm to the character and appearance of the host building and surrounds, including the CA. It would comply with the requirements of Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and saved Policy TC3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994). Together these seek to ensure proposals relate to surrounding development, meet high standards of design, and protect the character of conservation areas. The appeal scheme would also be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainability and requires new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Conditions

10. I have considered the imposition of conditions in light of advice in Planning Policy Guidance and the Framework. In addition to the standard implementation condition, the approved plans are listed for certainty.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given, and having regard to all matters, the appeal is allowed.

C Hall

INSPECTOR