
Appeals Received South Sunderland

Between 01/07/2009 and 31/07/2009

Ref No	Address	Description	Date Appeal Lodged
09/00027/REF	8 Colchester Terrace Sunderland SR4 7RY	Part two storey and part first floor rear extension	14/07/2009

Appeals Determined Sunderland South
Between 01/07/2009 and 31/07/2009

TEAM	Ref No	ADDRESS	Description	Decision	Date of Decision
	09/00004/REF	Saint Johns Methodist Church Ashbrooke Road Sunderland SR2 7HQ	The installation of a radio base station consisting of the replacement of existing louvres with Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) replicas and the installation of 4 no. telecommunications antennas within the bell tower, together with the installation of equipment cabinets within the bell tower and a meter cabinet located externally.	DISMIS	03/07/2009



Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 3 June 2009

Site visit made on 3 June 2009

by **Richard McCoy BSc, MSc, DipTP,**
MRTPI, IHBC

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

The Planning Inspectorate
4/11 Eagle Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

☎ 0117 372 6372
email: enquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk

Decision date:
3 July 2009

Appeal Ref: APP/J4525/A/09/2097926

St Johns Methodist Church, Ashbrooke Road, Sunderland, SR2 7HQ

- 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 Telefonica O2 UK Ltd against the decision of Sunderland City Council.
- The application Ref 08/04199/FUL, dated 5 November 2008, was refused by notice dated 9 January 2009.
- The development proposed is the installation of a radio base station consisting of the replacement of existing louvers with glass reinforced plastic replicas and the installation of 4 no. telecommunications antennas within the bell tower, together with the installation of equipment cabinets within the bell tower and a meter cabinet located externally.

Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main issues

2. I consider the main issues to be the impact of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

3. St John's Church is a Grade II listed building situated within the Ashbrooke Conservation Area. This appeal follows 2 earlier dismissed appeals ref. APP/J4525/A/06/2029614 and APP/J4525/A/07/2053043 for similar works at this church. The Inspector at those appeals found the principle of the replacement of the timber louvers with glass reinforced plastic (GRP) replicas to be acceptable but not the detail which he decided would have had an adverse visual impact.
4. From my assessment of this appeal I see no reason to disagree with this principle. In this instance all of the timber louvers would be removed and replaced with GRP replicas. Following on from the previous appeals a new GRP sample louver panel was obtained which I viewed along with the earlier sample, during the Hearing. While the more recent sample is a better match for timber a number of points arise.
5. The section of the sample panel appears to be somewhat insubstantial. This was a problem with the sample that has been erected on the church which

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- appears to have lost its shape and sagged. I am informed by the appellant that this can be overcome by making the GRP louvers more rigid through the application of a stiffener although I have few details before me on how this would be achieved or indeed perform under diurnal thermal change and wind loading.
6. Of further concern would be how the replica panels would weather, particularly in relation to the applied timber colour and pattern fading or wearing away. I accept that the sample I was shown was a reasonable likeness of the timber louvers but I consider insufficient evidence was presented to explain how it would weather over time when exposed to the elements.
 7. I note the manufacturer's email dated 15 September 2008 to the appellant regarding the Ultra Violet (UV) stability of the paint but I am not convinced that the replica louvers panels would weather in the same way as the wooden louvers in terms of colour and patina.
 8. Furthermore, although an improvement on the previous sample, I still detected a sheen in the finish of the new sample which did not quite match the matt appearance of the timber louvers. From the street level position where I viewed the church tower I am quite certain this sheen would be discernable, particularly under damp conditions.
 9. It was suggested that a condition, examples of which were supplied by the appellant from planning permissions and listed building consents granted at various locations in Scotland, could be attached to any permission requiring the replicas to be replaced at a future date if they lost their shape or weathered in an eccentric fashion.
 10. However, I consider that such a condition would not meet the tests set out in Circular 11/95; *The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions* as it would not be precise or easily enforced. For example, who would decide which louvres needed to be replaced and should they be replaced with another GRP replica louver?
 11. In addition, I consider that a condition requiring the timber louvers to be set aside to be re-instated at some future would not ameliorate the harm the replica louvers would cause to the listed building and the conservation area during the time they were in-situ.
 12. While I note that the previous Inspector considered the proposed replacement of all of the louvers to be a step towards a visually acceptable solution, I like him, am unconvinced that the replica louvres, even at the height they would be installed, would appear to have a traditional character or would maintain their shape and weather in a way that would achieve a reasonably close approximation to the timber louvres they would replace.
 13. In which case I find myself arriving at the same conclusion that the proposal would run contrary to Policy B4 of the City of Sunderland Unitary Development Plan, adopted 1998 and the advice in Planning Policy Guidance 15; *Planning and the Historic Environment* as it would harm the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

14. In reaching my decision I have taken account of the economic benefits to the church from playing host to these antennae. I appreciate that the church is a community asset and that considerable financial costs have to be met in maintaining this fine listed building.
15. However, I am not convinced that this is the only way in which this could be achieved and I find the economic considerations are not sufficient to outweigh the harm the proposal would cause to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.
16. I note that alternative sites for the proposal were considered but after a search of the target area no viable and accessible alternative locations were found. I note also that an International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection certificate on public exposure to radio waves, as per the guidance in Planning Policy Guidance 8; *Telecommunication*, has been submitted.
17. Nevertheless, these considerations are not sufficient to outweigh the harm the proposal would cause to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area. Therefore having considered all the matters raised in the representations and for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Richard McCoy

INSPECTOR