
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2017

by L Fleming BSc (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V2825/W/16/3165886

Beaumont House, Cliftonville, Northampton NN1 5BN

- 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 Colin Clayson (Clayson Country Homes Ltd) against the decision of Northampton Borough Council.
 - The application Ref N/2016/0351, dated 16 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 2 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is extension to existing building to form fourth floor and create 10no residential apartments.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area taking into account its impact on the setting of the Billing Road Conservation Area and the settings of the grade II listed Beaumont Villa, Northampton General Hospital Building and Sunnyside.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a large modern commercial building and grounds which benefits from extant consent for conversion from offices to 47 dwellings. It is adjacent to the Billing Road Conservation Area (CA) and the grade II listed Beaumont Villa, Northampton General Hospital Building and Sunnyside.
 4. In accordance with the duty imposed by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings or any features of special architectural or historic interest. Furthermore, paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of new development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
 5. The CA is characterised by mid-Victorian buildings of a variety of sizes. The properties on the north side of Billing Road, opposite the appeal site have varying traditional details but are all set back from the road a similar distance with small spaces between them and of a similar height creating an interesting and imposing traditional street frontage. To the east of the appeal site is the
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grade II listed Beaumont Villa, a substantial traditional property set in a spacious plot positioned relatively close to the appeal building. In my view, the significance of the CA is largely drawn from the collective group of high quality historic buildings and Beaumont Villa's significance is derived from its architectural quality as well as through forming part of the group of historic buildings.

6. I acknowledge that the appeal building is set back from Billing Road and set down into the plot. I note the trees within and adjacent to the appeal site would soften the impact of the proposed development. I also note that there would be some enhancements to the appearance of the appeal building including new windows and doors, activity at roof level through a balcony, increased vertical emphasis and its overall regeneration.
7. However, the modern L-shaped appeal building is tall and wide. The proposed additional floor would significantly increase the height and overall bulk of the appeal building significantly increasing its prominence within the Billing Road street scene.
8. The proposed development would therefore exacerbate the bulky and utilitarian appearance of the appeal building. In doing so, it would draw attention to a building of highly modern appearance in stark contrast with Beaumont Villa and the traditional buildings on the opposite side of Billing Road. In my view this contrast and diversion of attention would harm the significance of the group of high quality historic buildings.
9. I have considered the effect on the grade II listed Northampton General Hospital Building and Sunnyside. However, the separation distances and intervening trees are such that the proposal would have a neutral effect on these buildings and thus their settings would be preserved.
10. Nevertheless, overall, I find the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the grade II listed Beaumont Villa and the setting of the CA, thus harming the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be contrary to the provisions of the respective sections of the Act and would fail to accord with paragraph 132 of the Framework, which attaches great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets and their settings.
11. For the same reasons the proposal would not accord with the development plan, specifically Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (2014) and Policy 1 of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan (2013), which taken together, aim to ensure good design and that new development does not harm designated heritage assets.
12. That said, in the context of the significance of the heritage assets as a whole, I would calibrate the harm arising from the proposed development, in accordance with paragraphs 133 and 134 of the Framework, as less than substantial. In these circumstances, the Framework requires the degree of harm to be balanced against any public benefits the development may bring.
13. There would indeed be some benefits, such as ten more dwellings thus contributing to housing supply in the Borough in a location where services and employment can be easily accessed through walking, cycling or using public transport. The occupants might work locally and support local services and there may also be employment opportunities associated with building the

properties. The proposal would also represent the redevelopment of previously developed land. However, these benefits, though they may be accepted as public, are modest, and do not outweigh the harm identified to the designated heritage assets.

14. In reaching these conclusions I acknowledge that the Council are unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land within the terms of paragraph 47 of the Framework. I have also considered the appeal decision¹ relevant to this matter. However, I have found harm to the setting of designated heritage assets and consequently, footnote 9 from the Framework indicates that development should be restricted. Even if this is not the case and the second bullet point under the decision-taking section of paragraph 14 is engaged, in my view the harm would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme when assessed against the Framework taken as a whole.

Other Matters

15. I acknowledge the appellant purchased Beaumont House and Beaumont Villa together and Beaumont Villa has now been successfully redeveloped. I note that this work has been more costly than anticipated and the proposed development is intended to make the redevelopment of Beaumont House more economically viable. However, these matters or any others raised do not outweigh my previous findings.

Conclusion

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

L Fleming

INSPECTOR

¹ Appeal Reference APP/V2825/A/14/2228866