
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 April 2017

by Jonathan Hockley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/16/3162852

Place Manor, Wallingford Road, Streatley, Reading RG8 9JS

- 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 & Mrs Baldwin against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00531/FULD, undated, but dated as 22 February 2016 on the decision notice, was refused by notice dated 6 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1 no 5 bed dwelling with associated garaging, amenity space and alterations to vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal was submitted with a range of revised plans. These contain various changes to the scheme, including in layout terms the removal of turning space adjacent to eastern elevation, vehicular access narrowed, changes to boundary treatment on eastern site boundary, the slight reorientation of vehicular access, garage and workshop positions reversed, as well as for elevational plans dormer windows removed from west elevation and replaced with roof lights.
3. The plans thus encompass a fairly wide range of alterations to the scheme. These have not been subject to formal public consultation, and whilst I note that the Council state that they have no objection to myself considering such plans, other interested parties such as the Parish Council and surrounding residents, of which a fair number commented on the application and the appeal and may not all have had the benefit of the full consideration of such plans. When taken in the round I consider that for me to consider these plans would be in breach of the Wheatcroft principle, and I have therefore considered the appeal on the basis of the plans on which the Council made their decision. I note in this respect that the appellant considers that the original application stands on its merits.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this case are as follows:
 - Whether the proposed dwelling would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Streatley Conservation Area, and whether the scheme would preserve the setting of nearby Grade II listed buildings.
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- The effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of neighbouring residents, with regard to outlook and privacy.

Reasons

5. The village of Streatley is located on the west bank of the River Thames, and is centred on the cross roads of Streatley Hill/High Street with Reading/Wallingford Road. The Streatley Conservation Area (SCA) is based on the High Street, which has a number of historic buildings located upon it. Such historic buildings, along with those located around the cross roads and along Wallingford Road, including Place Manor, their placement and inter-relationships contribute substantially to the character of the SCA. This character is added to significantly by various areas of open spaces, particularly around and close to the river, but also throughout the conservation area, with such spaces allowing appreciation of the character of the SCA and its setting, both from within the SCA and from outside of it.
6. The appeal site lies within the SCA and comprises part of the rear garden to Place Manor, a grade II listed building. This 17th century property with significant 19th century alterations has a prominent location close to Wallingford Road. The house has a rendered with timber framed façade with red brick and flint dressed plinths. An appraisal¹ for the SCA (the appraisal) notes that Place Manor is notable for its roofscape, including particularly its chimneys which make a positive contribution to the SCA.
7. To the right side of the property is sited the vehicular access to the house, with large brick gate piers set into the attractive brick and flint boundary wall which surrounds much of the property and its gardens. Attractive tiled roofed outbuildings are located on the north side of this drive, with a similar building virtually directly opposite the gateway. The land rises fairly steeply towards the north west. A turning hammerhead is located between these outbuildings; the proposal seeks to construct an access leading up out of this area and build a five bedroom dwelling to the north west of Place Manor, with the built structure being sited largely on the site of an existing tennis court.
8. The rear garden of Place Manor doglegs to the rear of Place Manor Cottages, Grade II listed buildings. These cottages are located directly on Wallingford Road and comprise 3 red brick terraced properties. The left hand cottages have 3 small pitched roof dormers to front, with the right hand cottage having 2 larger tile hung dormers. Due to the topography of the area, the rear gardens of the properties rise steeply to the boundary with the garden of Place Manor.
9. To the north of the appeal plot is the property of Ashcote House, which is accessed via a track from Streatley Hill. Within this property's boundaries lies the Grade II listed Dovecote, described in the listing as being approximately 100m to the north of Place Manor. The Dovecote is also a scheduled monument, and dates from the late 17th century, being constructed of flint and brick with a conical old tiled roof with a louvred gable dormer facing towards the appeal site and a square louvred cupola. To the north west of the appeal site lies the steeply ascending National Trust land of Lardon Chase, which has extensive public access. The Chase, and the surrounding area including

¹ Conservation Area Appraisal- Streatley, West Berkshire Council August 2010

Streatley and the appeal site lie in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

10. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 states that special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Section 66 (1) of the same act states that, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects the setting of a listed building, special regard should be had to the desirability of preserving this setting.
11. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) says when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset (including conservation areas), great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of a heritage asset, or by development within its setting. The Framework defines setting as the surroundings in which the asset is experienced. Elements of setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance, or may be neutral.
12. Policies CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy² together state that regard will be given to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and by ensuring that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement pattern and character. New development must respect and enhance the character and appearance of the area.
13. Whilst the site does not have public access, it nevertheless forms part of the patchwork of open space that adds to the character and appearance of the SCA. The site benefits from reasonable screening from many angles, with various trees set in and around the proposed access screening much of the site from Wallingford Road and trees to the rear screening many views from Lardon Chase. Nevertheless, and despite the massing of the proposed dwelling being reduced from previous iterations and the fact that the proposal would be partly set into the land, involving a ground level reduction as part of the construction, the dwelling would still be visible from Wallingford Road. The proposal would also be clearly visible from the bottom end of Streatley Hill, to the south, which also lies within the SCA.
14. Such views would be more significant in winter than in summer and would affect views of the Chase from Wallingford Road from certain angles during such times, as well as from Streatley Hill. Whilst I note the imagery produced by the appellant showing that such views from Wallingford Road would be retained, from angles slightly further to the south the effect of the roof of the proposal would be more prominent. I note in this respect that the Appraisal does not identify the site specifically as a 'garden contributing to the public realm'; however, the site lies within the SCA and the proposal in my view would remove part of the open space to the rear of Place Manor which contributes to the character and appearance of the SCA.
15. The Council raise concerns over the effect of the proposal in views from the Chase of the Dovecote and Place Manor, considering that the proposal would add a new tier of development. Given the location of Ashcote House and

² West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026, 2012

further detached properties to the north of this house I do not consider that the proposal would create a new development tier, and during my visit due to intervening vegetation identified views from the Chase of the site were barely visible. I am not therefore convinced that this would cause harm to the key view from the Chase identified in the Appraisal or indeed to the setting of the listed buildings from this angle. However, from other views such as from the section of Streatley Hill within the SCA, where the rear chimneys of Place Manor are clearly visible the proposed dwelling would adversely affect the setting of Place Manor, which is read in this context as a substantial property with large open gardens to the rear, blending into the Chase in views.

16. Historic England raise concerns over the effect of the proposal on the historic 'manorial complex' of Place Manor, including Place Manor itself, Place Manor Cottages and the Dovecote. I am not convinced that the proposal would cause harm to this complex, such as it exists; the Dovecote is now physically and visually separate from Place Manor, and the height and placement of the proposal would not affect the illustrative value of how the dovecote formed part of the former wider agricultural complex. However, as stated above, I do consider that the scheme would cause harm to both the setting of Place Manor and to the character and appearance of the SCA.
17. I do not consider that such harm would reach the high hurdle of substantial harm (as defined in the Framework) to the significance of the heritage assets. However, though less than substantial, there would, nevertheless, be real and serious harm which requires clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 134 of the Framework indicates that such harm is to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
18. The public benefits of the scheme would include the economic and social benefits arising from the construction of a new house. In this respect I note the bespoke design of the proposal and acknowledge that the construction costs of such a dwelling are likely to be fairly high. I can also appreciate and sympathise that the proposal would allow the appellant's parents to be provided for in a modern and accessible manner. Nevertheless, a less than substantial harm does not equate to a less than substantial objection. The benefits are fairly limited, and are insufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm that the proposed development would cause to the SCA and the setting of Place Manor.
19. I therefore conclude that the proposed dwelling would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Streatley Conservation Area and would also harm the setting, and therefore the significance of Place Manor. The proposal would be contrary to policies CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Living Conditions

20. Neighbouring residents raise substantial objections to the effect of the proposed house on their living conditions. I visited the rear gardens of Nos 1-3 Place Manor Cottages and the Old School on Streatley Hill. I note the disagreement between parties over the visibility of the proposed scheme and the proximity of the garden and rear elevations of Place Manor Cottages. However, given potential landscaping, topography and angles of sight involved whilst I note that the new property would be visible from these properties, and particularly from the highest terrace to the rear of No 3 Place Manor Cottages, I

am not convinced that the proposal would be so visible so as to be overbearing in the outlook from the rear of these properties.

21. Similarly I am also not convinced that adverse effects on the privacy of the residents of these properties would be caused by the proposal. Whilst the use of the land and garden areas may be more intensive than is currently the case with the tennis court, inter-visibility would be limited for the same reasons as above, and the garden area at present could be used more intensively.
22. However, from the Old School the effect would be different. The rear garden to this property is long, well maintained and is fairly open on its boundary with Place Manor, which it shares for much of its eastern boundary. The land that the garden lies on rises from the Old School and at its northern end is set higher than the land which the appeal proposal would be located upon. Nevertheless, the western flank of the property and its south western gable would be clearly visible from this garden.
23. Within this south western gable a master bedroom is proposed at first floor height with bi-fold doors and a Juliet balcony. Although the angle would not be direct, views would be possible of the rear garden of the Old School from such a window providing a perception of overlooking where none exists presently. The west elevation would contain two dormer windows serving the master bedroom and 2nd bedroom of the property; such windows would directly overlook the rear garden of the old school, at a height which would have clear views. Such a size of building at such close proximity to the rear garden of the Old School would also have a minor overbearing effect on the users of this garden where currently views are generally open. This would have an adverse effect on the living conditions of the residents of this property, both in terms of outlook and privacy.
24. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the living conditions of the residents of the Old School, with regard to outlook and privacy. The proposal would be contrary to the Framework, which states as a core planning principle that planning should always seek a good standard of amenity for all existing occupants of land.

Conclusion

25. To summarise, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the setting, and therefore the significance of the Grade II listed Place Manor and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the SCA. Although I have concluded that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to these heritage assets, I do not consider that the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh the clear harm caused. Furthermore, I have also concluded that the proposal would adversely affect the living conditions of the residents of the Old School.
26. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR