
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 15 May 2017

by Jonathan Hockley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/W/16/3162386

Dimsdale House, Essendon Place, High Road, Essendon, Hatfield AL9 6GZ

- 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 Ms C Evans against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2016/1024/HOUSE, dated 23 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is a glass porch.
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Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/Y/16/3162385

Dimsdale House, Essendon Place, High Road, Essendon, Hatfield AL9 6GZ

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Ms C Evans against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2016/1025/LB, dated 23 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 August 2016.
 - The works proposed are a glass porch.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt, aside from a number of exceptions. One such exception is the extension of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Based on the Council's figures, the proposed porch would have a footprint of some 10.5m² and would constitute a 4% increase in the total footprint of the dwelling. Both parties consider that the proposal would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and based on the plans and the above figures I see no reason to disagree with this assessment.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in both cases is whether the proposal would preserve the special architectural and historical interest of the Grade II listed building.
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Reasons

4. Essendon Place is a late 18th century country house, which the listing states was remodelled around 1830 and extended and refurbished in the 1920s. Further extensions took place in the 1960s. The building is split into 3 residential properties, of which Dimsdale House forms the northernmost. The 2 storied and attic building is constructed in cream and pale yellow painted stucco with a slate roof. Around two thirds along the building lies projecting square pavilions enclosing a Greek Ionic loggia with end bays incorporating shallow segmental headed recesses; the loggia forms part of the adjacent property, but the right hand bay is part of Dimsdale House. The special interest of the building is defined by the high quality of the structure and its architecture and detailing. Although quite long overall and not symmetrical as a whole, detailing is consistent across the façade of the structure and the building has a strong vertical emphasis, enhanced by the segmental headed recesses, Ionic columns, and rhythmic 12 light sash windows.
5. The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special interest to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features or architectural interest it possesses.
6. The proposal seeks to construct a porch on the façade of the building, to surround an existing kitchen door. The porch would be constructed of glass and would be sited 50mm from the existing wall. It would have a slight slope to the roof and would be wider than tall. As a consequence the right hand wall would be sited towards the sash windows to the right, with the left hand wall extending over an area where a current square painted metal downpipe is sited; it is not clear what would happen to the downpipe as a result of the proposal.
7. Whilst designed in a reasonably minimalistic fashion, the overall form and design of the scheme would sit awkwardly against the façade of the listed building, with the horizontal emphasis of the overall porch shape, despite its clear materials, jarring with the vertical elements of the overall building. The appellant considers that there is no opportunity now to gain a clear view of the building as a whole; whilst this may be the case Dimsdale House is read in conjunction with the adjacent property and the proposal would draw the eye away from the loggia and its adjacent end bays, detracting from the simple classical architectural details of the building. Public views of Dimsdale House are very limited, due to extensive landscaping between the building and High Road; nevertheless, the proposal would still cause harm to the significance of the listed building and the extent of landscaping may change in the future.
8. The Framework makes it clear that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a listed building, great weight should be given to its conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration of the heritage asset, and as they are irreplaceable, any harm should require clear and convincing justification. For the reasons given above, I consider the proposal would result in harm being caused to the significance of this listed building. However, and particularly as the proposal would not affect the fabric of the building, I am satisfied in this case that the degree of harm caused would be less than substantial.
9. In such situations this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal, including securing the asset's optimum use. The porch would clearly

enhance the appellants' enjoyment of the property and have functional benefits. However, leaving aside whether the appellants' enjoyment of the property can be properly regarded as a public benefit, it appears to function as a dwelling already. It is well maintained and seemingly in good repair. As a consequence, what public benefits there might be are insufficient to outweigh the harm caused.

10. Examples are provided to me of other listed buildings where glass extensions have been constructed. I do not doubt that in the right circumstances such structures can be provided successfully on historic buildings; however, for the reasons given above I consider that the proposal would cause harm to the significance of the host building. Furthermore, each case must be dealt with on its own merits.
11. To summarise I consider that the proposed extension would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of this Grade II listed building, and would not preserve its special architectural or historic interest. It has not been shown that public benefits would outweigh this harm, and the proposal would conflict with the Framework. Therefore, for the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeals should fail.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR