



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 October 2019

by David L Morgan BA (Hist) MA (T&CP) MA (Build Con) (IoAAS)

MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 6 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/C3240/W/19/3226063

Station Bungalow, Church Road, Jackfield, Telford TF8 7ND

- 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 Doug Platt against the decision of Telford and Wrekin Council.
 - The application Ref TWC/2018/0889, dated 24 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 15 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is new bungalow to land adjacent to Crossing Bungalow, Jackfield, Telford.
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Decision

1. The Appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The planning application form refers to the site as 'Station Bungalow', whilst the appeal form and Council references use 'Crossing Bungalow'. Appropriately I have used the former in the template above, though for clarity, as the description of development makes clear, the site is on land adjacent to Crossing Bungalow.
3. The Councils' decision notice makes no reference to the effect of the proposed development on the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site (IGWHS) and this reflects the recommendation in the officer report attached to the questionnaire. However, previous recommendations have referred to the effect on the IGWHS and indeed the body of the report itself makes numerous references to it. The Heritage Statement submitted by the Appellant also makes reference to the same. As this was clearly a consideration in the determination of the case and a sensitivity of which the Appellant was aware, I have also given consideration to this matter in my reasoning.

Main Issues

4. These are a) whether the proposed development would preserve the setting of the Grade II* listed building known as the Jackfield Tile Museum (listed as Jackfield Tile Museum Front Block), b) whether it would preserve the character or appearance of the Severn Gorge Conservation Area (SGCA) c) whether it would safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for which the IGWHS was inscribed and d) whether it would preserve the setting of non-designated heritage assets adjacent to the site.

Reasons

Significance

5. The appeal site comprises part of the land associated with Crossing Bungalow, a single storey structure apparently formerly associated with a now lost railway infrastructure. Although much altered, the age of the building is suggested by the large decorative brick stack projecting from its roof. The land seems likely to have accommodated the tracks serving the tileworks and other industry at that time.
6. The Appeal site is in part framed by the imposing presence of the former Encaustic Tileworks, a bold, self-consciously architectural presence that dominates this part of the valley. The confident Neo-Gothic architecture heralds the rich aesthetic of the products once made, displayed and no doubt sold within. This edifice also sets the architectural tone for the area, with the more low-key adjacent school picking-up the Gothic theme which is repeated with greater force in the not too distant St Mary's Church. Together these institutions give a strong sense of coherence to the settlement, otherwise made up of a scattering of more diverse modest dwellings of mixed date and vernacular character. Collectively however, they invest this part of the SGCA with the strong and distinct character of a community at the heart of a once thriving industrial area. This strong and distinctive character, given added force by the the designation of the tileworks as a Grade II* listed building, the designation of the SGCA and the formal inscription of the IGWHS for its OUV all point to a locale of considerable cumulative heritage significance.
7. The expectations for development in this context are justifiably high. The Courts attach considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting, whilst paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) gives great weight to the conservation of all designated heritage assets or their settings. The Council's development plan policies, as they relate to development affecting listed buildings, conservation areas and world heritage sites, all support the clear expectation that any development will at the very least preserve the salient attributes of these assets.

The proposals

8. The proposals comprise a two/three bedroom dwelling which, utilizing the sloping topography of the site, incorporates two floors, two storeys facing the river to the north, one to the south facing the road. This latter front elevation is essentially bungalow in form and appearance, comprising a low front elevation of three bays incorporating hipped and gabled roofs. This (with greater vertical emphasis) is picked-up on the rear, though with gables and balconettes with door openings below. The flank elevations to Brook Cottage the west and Crossing Bungalow to the east are blind. A brick stack offers some visual focus to the east elevation, whilst all are proposed to be clad in a mixture of brick and painted render. Some planting flanks an otherwise open forecourt and parking area to the south and east.
9. In spatial terms the proposal would manifestly encroach on the open area of the historic rail corridor thus materially diminishing the open context to the former tile factory and school. The close abutment of the proposed development with that of the existing Brook Cottage would compound this

sense of enclosure and uncomfortable visual congestion. More specifically in design terms, the proposals offer no attribute of form, detail or deployment of materials that acknowledges or attempts to address the acute sensitivity of the site's context. Instead they offer a bland suburban design formula that can more readily be attributed to *anywhere*. Whilst there is of course residential development, some of it modern, within the settlement that might not achieve the highest standards of design, none of the examples I saw, in the context of such highly graded designated assets, demonstrate the same lack of visual empathy expressed by these appeal proposals. This cramped and incongruous proposal would sit in awkward and discordant juxtaposition with the heritage assets in its immediate context and in this sensitive location within the SGCA and IGWHS.

Effect on designated heritage assets

10. As a consequence, the proposed development would fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II* listed building, contrary to the clear expectations of the section 66 of the Act. It would fail to preserve the character or the appearance of the SGCA, again contrary to section 72 of the same. In failing to safeguard the OUV of the IGWHS, in conjunction with the two previous concerns, the proposals would also fail to meet the objectives of paragraph 193 of the Framework, which anticipates great weight being given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Insofar as the proposals would fail to preserve the setting of the former school, a non-designated heritage asset, they would also conflict with paragraph 197 of the Framework. For related design-based reasons they would also be contrary to the expectations of paragraph 130 of the Framework, which anticipates development taking opportunities to improve the character and qualities of an area, advising that development failing to do this (as these proposals do) should be refused.
11. For the same reasons the proposals would conflict with Policy BE1 of the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan (T&WLP), specifically criteria i, iv and v thereof in respect of design. They would conflict with Policy BE4 of the T&WLP, specifically criterion vi thereof in respect of listed buildings and conflict with Policy BE5 of the same, criteria i and ii thereof, both of which anticipate development preserving key attributes of a conservation area. Lastly the proposals would conflict with criterion iii of Policy B6 of the T&WLP, which anticipates the settings of buildings of local interest being preserved.

Planning balance and conclusions

12. Having identified harm to a heritage asset or assets, the Framework, in paragraphs 195 and 196, requires the magnitude of that harm to be assessed and in both circumstances weighed against any public benefits the development may bring. When considered in the context of the wider setting of the listed building and in relation to the conservation area and world heritage site as a whole, I consider the scale of the harm to be less than substantial in extent. Nevertheless, this should not be taken to mean less than substantial planning objection, especially where the national statutory and policy tests are not met.
13. The provision of an additional dwelling may rightly be considered a public benefit as an increment in increasing housing supply in the context of acknowledged national housing need. However, in the greater scheme of things this is a modest benefit, and clearly in the circumstances of this case, very considerably outweighed by the harm to designated heritage assets and the

resultant breach of statutory tests and national and local development plan policy.

14. For the reasons given above and having considered all matters raised in evidence I conclude that the appeal should fail.

David Morgan

Inspector