



Appeal Decisions

Hearing Held on 13 February 2020

Site visit made on 13 February 2020

by A J Mageean BA (Hons) BPI PhD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M4510/W/19/3222814

St George's Church Hall, St George's Close, Jesmond NE2 2TF

- 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 St George's Church against the decision of Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council.
 - The application Ref 2018/0798/01/DET, dated 8 June 2018, was refused by notice dated 20 August 2018.
 - The development proposed is new single storey extension to south west corner of Church Hall, with a glass façade and flat zinc roof. Internal alterations to the existing hall to enable the building to better accommodate multiple activities and events at the same time. The proposed design provides additional independent spaces with improved access. The work includes alterations to the tracery window in the south gable elevation and repairs. The large lower panes will be re-glazed in clear glass with lead comes and coloured border glass to allow more daylight. Existing glazing to small panes in upper tracery will be retained.
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Appeal Ref: APP/M4510/Y/19/3222817

St George's Church Hall, St George's Close, Jesmond NE2 2TF

- The appeal is made under Section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by St George's Church against the decision of Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council.
 - The application Ref 2018/0799/01/LBC, dated 8 June 2018, was refused by notice dated 20 August 2018.
 - The works proposed are new single storey extension to south west corner of Church Hall, with a glass façade and flat zinc roof. Internal alterations to the existing hall to enable the building to better accommodate multiple activities and events at the same time. The proposed design provides additional independent spaces with improved access. The work includes alterations to the tracery window in the south gable elevation and repairs. The large lower panes will be re-glazed in clear glass with lead comes and coloured border glass to allow more daylight. Existing glazing to small panes in upper tracery will be retained.
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Decision

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal proposals relate specifically to the Hall of St Georges Church (referred to henceforth as 'the Hall'). Much of the appellant's documentation also refers to the associated improvements to and extension of the Grade I listed Church of St George (referred to henceforth as 'the Church'). I understand that the proposals for the Church have planning permission. The associated Listed Building Consent is the subject to Ecclesiastical Exemption which I understand is currently under consideration by the Chancellor.
3. The Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) sets out that the main point of contention in this case is the proposed removal of much of the battlemented porch and the addition of the glazed extension. Other elements, including internal alterations to the ground floor rooms, removing existing partition walls, installing new rooms over the main hall and the installation of new rooflights are considered acceptable.
4. The SoCG states that the replacement of the glass within the tracery window on the south gable of the Hall may be appropriate if justified by its condition. Prior to the hearing, the appellant submitted a Glazing Report¹ which sets out the condition of the window along with recommendations. The Council agreed at the Hearing that this report provided justification for a hybrid scheme, whereby some new glass to the lower levels of the window could be introduced.
5. The Council's Statement of Case includes reference at paragraph 5.14 to discussions with Church representatives about alternative proposals, and the need to maintain direct access from the main hall. It was agreed that this paragraph was not relevant to this particular case and that it should be disregarded.
6. A document updating progress with the Council's Development and Allocations Plan (DAP), part two of the Local Plan, was presented to the Hearing. As a result the parties agreed that it's policies should be afforded some weight, with Policies DM15 and DM16 noted as being of particular relevance.

Main Issues

7. The main issues in both appeals are the effect of the proposed development and works on the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II Listed Hall and School of St George, the setting of the Grade I Listed Church of St George and the character and appearance of the Jesmond Dene Conservation Area; and, if any harm would be caused, whether this would be outweighed by other considerations, including public benefits.

Reasons

Significance of the heritage assets

8. The development of the Hall was closely associated with the Church and also the vicarage, which has since been demolished. The original conception of these three related elements, arranged around the green space, was important. The remaining pair have strong associative significance, linked to the development of the residential suburb of Jesmond, and in particular the

¹ St Georges Church Hall, Jesmond *Glazing Report on South Window* Keith Barley of Barley Studio Ltd, Inspection undertaken 3 December 2019

collaboration between the Churches first incumbent Somerset Pennyfather, the donor and benefactor Charles Mitchell, and the architect, Thomas R. Spence. The presence of these heritage assets was of strong spiritual and social significance historically, with these values enduring to the present day.

9. In architectural terms the Church is noteworthy as a demonstration of a particular interpretation of the Arts and Crafts movement, expressed particularly by the outstanding quality of its decorative interior. This expression is much more modest and restrained in the Hall. Nonetheless, elements of this complementary form can be seen on its exterior, particularly in the snecked sandstone with ashlar plinths, the wide front entrance gable with shafts and pinnacles, and the Gothic tracery window on the south elevation. The architectural significance of the Hall relates in the main to its western elevation onto the green. The interior has been reconfigured several times resulting in a loss of architectural interest, though elements including the full height main hall with trusses, tie beams and ceiling crosses, are still visible.
10. Following its completion in around 1887, the Hall was extended to the south a few years later, also to the designs of Spence, apparently to accommodate a gymnasium for the young men of the area. The notably 'masculine' appearance of this addition, with its battlemented porch entrance and lion head motifs perhaps expressed this function, though I understand that this use did not endure for more than a couple of years.
11. The appellant suggests that, based on the quality of the drawings associated with this extension, and the fact that its form does not fully resonate with the existing buildings, Spence's involvement may have been limited. Its robust design elements do not fully accord with the more delicate features of the main entrance, it projects a little above the eaves, and it does not have the same window design as the original structure. Nonetheless the Gothic revival references in its form and detailing does reflect the eclecticism of the Arts and Crafts movement in church architecture at that time, and in terms of scale and materials the extension does not appear jarring or incongruous. Furthermore, it provides evidence of the social history of the area. As such there is associative and architectural value in this slightly later addition.
12. Turning to the setting of the Church, its tower, designed as a Venetian style campanile, is of great interest and significance as a prominent decorative element of the skyline of north Newcastle. More locally, the Church's main southern elevation, is of impressive form and scale with decorative elements, including the detailing on the tower, being best appreciated from the wide green space in the foreground. The Hall is a visible but subservient element of this local setting. Nonetheless, it is contained within the same visual envelope, with these largely unaltered Victorian buildings forming an impressive sweeping vista across the green when viewed from Osborne Road and Lindisfarne Road. The battlemented porch is a clearly visible element of this overall composition, particularly from Lindisfarne Road. At the time of my site visit the trees on the green were not in leaf. I appreciate that during the spring and summer months the inter-visibility of these elements will be more restricted.
13. Within the Jesmond Dene Conservation Area (CA), characteristic qualities include the low density Victorian and Edwardian housing within a mature landscape setting. The Conservation Area Character Statement (CACS) also refers to the Church as being one of the most dominant buildings in the

Conservation area, and the fact that the setting to the south of the Church is largely unaltered.

14. Summing up, the significance and special interest of the Hall relates to its architectural form, largely in terms of the combination of elements on its exterior, as evidenced on its main western elevation. More generally, the Hall's special interest is closely connected to the Church in terms of historic associative, spiritual and social values, and in terms of the architectural interest of this grouping of Victorian ecclesiastical buildings with their focal point being the green. The setting of the Church, and its presence within the CA are therefore also of heritage value and relevance in this case.

Impact of proposals

15. The addition of the single storey extension to the south western corner of the Hall would involve the removal of much of the battlemented porch, with only the southern wall including the lion head spout remaining. This element, as part of the slightly later extension of the Hall, is of heritage significance. The section of wall to the south of the main gable porch, including an original window, would also be removed. Whilst this area is currently recessed between the main porch and the battlemented porch, it is a visible element of the overall form and composition of the main western elevation. The window contained within it may not be in good repair, does not precisely match the window on the other side of the main porch and is somewhat hidden in all but direct views. However, these points do not fundamentally undermine its contribution. The permanent loss of these elements would therefore harm to the historic and architectural significance of the Hall.
16. The proposed addition, would extend across the southern section of the western frontage from the main gable porch, and would sit just below the eaves level of the main roof. It would appear relatively modest in scale and form and would have a translucent quality, meaning that it would appear subservient to the Hall. However, its minimalist frameless glazed form with flat zinc-finished roof would be an eye-catching addition when viewed from the green and Osborne Road. It would also compete with the prominent gable tracery window when viewed from Lindisfarne Road. I appreciate that this design is intentionally seeking to represent a new public image for the Hall, and indeed reflects the design of the extension being pursued for the Church. I will consider this point further in the planning balance section.
17. The appellant presented photographs of a range of contemporary extensions to prominent ecclesiastical and other buildings. These demonstrate that, whilst the sensitivity of the location must be carefully considered, high-quality non-traditional design can be accommodated whilst respecting historic form and fabric. Such considerations are reflected in the comments from heritage and amenity bodies in relation to the draft proposals for both the Church and the Hall. Specifically, Historic England's (HE) comments from 2016 refer to the "simplicity of the design allowing the parent buildings' historic and visual qualities to remain to the fore".
18. I agree that in basic terms such a design approach is not without merit, and that the finish of the proposal could be of high quality. However, as HE's general observations were made in the absence of statements of significance, it is not clear that consideration was given to the significant loss of historic fabric which would be required. Similarly, the correspondence with other amenity

bodies appears to have been during 2016, and pre-dates the Statement of Significance and Heritage Statement.

19. The loss of part of the Victorian fabric of the Hall, along with the modern form of the new addition, would be a visible change to the largely unaltered relationship between the Hall and the Church when viewed from the south. This would be particularly apparent when approaching from Lindisfarne Road to the south east. The design of the extension would reflect that currently being progressed for the Church itself. However, the position of that addition would be in a more discrete location, mostly to the rear of the Church with some visibility on the north eastern side of the Garden of Remembrance. In contrast the Hall extension would be a part of the primary elevation of the Hall. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that the comparatively small scale both of the loss of fabric, and of the addition, would mean that the degree of harm to the heritage significance of the Church's setting would be modest.
20. Turning to consider the effect on the CA, the small scale of the proposal would mean that the dominant Victorian elements of the Hall and Church as they relate to the green would remain evident in the local views identified in the CACS. Nonetheless the authenticity of these views as they contribute to the character and appearance of the CA would be altered. In this sense the proposal would not preserve the character and appearance of the CA, though the harm in this regard would be minor.
21. Summing up on the effect of the proposal on these heritage assets, in general terms a good proportion of the historic, architectural and social value of the Hall would remain legible. There would also be a small improvement through the removal of the non-original ramp to the main entrance. However, the heritage value of the Hall would be harmed by the loss of notable features. Further, the addition of a visually striking contemporary element would disrupt the otherwise largely unaltered views of the Church and Hall around the green. The proposal would therefore have a harmful effect on the special architectural and historic interest of the Hall, the setting of the Church and on the character and appearance of the CA.

Consideration

22. Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act² require that when considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works affecting a listed building or its setting, special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the building or its setting, or any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses. Section 72(1) requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation.
23. The development plan policies referred to in this case include Saved Policy C2 of the Newcastle Unitary Development Plan 1998 (UDP). This sets out that the alteration or extension of a listed building which would harm its architectural or historic interest or setting will not be allowed. This Policy does not reflect the more qualitative and proportionate consideration of proposals impacting on

² Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

heritage assets that are set out in Section 16 of the Framework. Specifically, it does not differentiate between substantial and less than substantial degrees of harm, and does not allow for the balancing of any harm with public benefits. These provisions are therefore less permissive of development than the Framework. Nonetheless, having regard to paragraph 213 of the Framework, the presumption in favour of preservation set out within Saved Policy C2 is consistent with the overriding purpose and intention of Section 16 of the Framework and the Act. Therefore, whilst it does not reflect the more nuanced approach to heritage matters, in so far as this Policy is consistent with the Framework it is not out of date.

24. UDP Saved Policy EN1.1 requires a high standard of design. It refers to retaining the 'best buildings' and integrating development into its setting. Also of relevance is Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan for Gateshead and Newcastle upon Tyne 2015 (CSUCP), which requires development to respect and enhance significant views and the setting of heritage assets, and to respond positively to local distinctiveness. It also requires a proactive approach to be taken to sustaining the historic environment, including positively responding to heritage assets that are at risk.
25. In this case I have found that the proposal would fail to preserve the heritage interest and significance of the Hall, the setting of the Church as well as the character and appearance of the Jesmond Dene Conservation Area. There would therefore be conflict with the provisions of statute, and the relevant aspects of UDP Policy C2 and EN1.1, and CSUCP Policy CS15. There would also be conflict with emerging DAP Policies DM15 and DM16 relating to the conservation of heritage assets.
26. When considered against the significance of these heritage assets overall the harm to significance would be less than substantial. In these circumstances the Framework requires that any identified harm is weighed against the public benefits which the proposal might secure. This also reflects the proactive approach to protecting the historic environment set out in Policy CS15.

The planning balance

27. The proposal seeks to respond to the current constraints of the Hall in terms of meeting the needs of a range of community activities, and the datedness/poor quality of facilities. These relate in large part to its internal configuration with interconnected rooms, restricted access to kitchen and toilet facilities, poor acoustics and failure to meet the requirements of certain groups. This means that its functionality, particularly the ability to accommodate more than one activity at a time, is less than optimal. The internal reconfiguration and improvement in facilities overall would deliver social benefits for the local community. Nonetheless, reconfiguring the internal space to provide improved event/meeting spaces and improved facilities is not at issue here. It therefore appears to me that some, though not all, of the functionality benefits relate to non-contentious elements.
28. That said, I recognise the role of the extension in supporting the internal improvements. In particular this would provide more space to accommodate access and circulation for wheelchair users, push chairs and buggies, as well as information boards, without taking space from the existing accommodation. The lobby area would provide the main access to the centrally located main kitchen and toilet facilities, allowing each room to be used independently. Also,

- without the extension the expansion of the Winskell Room to potentially accommodate its division into two rooms may not be possible. Finally, the extension would accommodate direct access to the small green space to the south of the building. This could potentially be enclosed to provide a safe space for toddler and children's groups, which I understand have previously left to find more suitable accommodation. In this sense the facilities provided would be suitable for the whole community, and there would be public benefits in this regard.
29. The current main entrance with its solid door and formal appearance may appear uninviting and off-putting to the wider community. In this sense the more transparent and contemporary nature of the extension would signal a shift to a more welcoming and inclusive identity for the Hall. The removal of the historic fabric would also open up the south western portion of this elevation. The largely glazed nature of the extension would have the effect of improving the visual links and connection with the green area and indeed the Church, and increasing natural surveillance and light within the Hall.
30. I therefore recognise that there would be some aesthetic and qualitative improvement of facilities as a result of this opening up of the Hall. I appreciate that this could make the Hall more attractive for hosting events such as weddings. The contemporary style of the extension would also signal a new phase in the role of the Hall as part of the future vision for the Church. I understand that this is linked to the Church's participation in the 'Church into Growth' initiative, aimed at improving its social significance within the local community.
31. However, it is not evident that the expression of the extension as a contemporary addition would itself deliver the sort of economic, social or environmental benefits which may be regarded as public benefits. Furthermore, whilst some adaptation of the proposals for the Hall have taken place, with plans for adding a porch to the southern gable window being dropped, I am not aware that other approaches to updating the image of these facilities have been considered or tested. Specifically, whilst there are brief references to alternative schemes having been discounted, there is little evidence of the detailed appraisal of other options for the management of the Hall and space around it which would not involve the removal of historic fabric to the extent currently proposed.
32. The appellant also suggests that if the building is incapable of being properly used by church or community groups there is a risk of it becoming unviable. In this sense it is suggested that the appeal scheme would retain a 'best building' in accordance with Policy EN1.1. However, in the absence of any business planning setting out current and anticipated future viability considerations, the evidence in this regard is scanty. Furthermore, as viability evidence is limited and the building is already in community use, the scheme is not required to secure the Hall's optimum viable use.
33. I appreciate that the plan for the whole site is the subject of a separate tree planting/landscaping project, though that is not before me.
34. Summing up, I have found that there would be less than substantial harm to the Hall, the Church and CA as a result of these proposals. However, this is real and serious harm which to which I am required to give considerable importance and weight. The appellant is seeking to adapt and update the Hall

facilities to ensure its continued contribution to the community. There would be public benefits in terms of the improved facilities overall and the increase in accessible and flexible accommodation. Some of this improvement is internal and not contested. The extension would contribute to this improvement of facilities by providing additional space and creating a new image for the Hall. However, I do not consider that image considerations can be regarded as public benefits. Overall, the heritage harm identified, particularly in terms of the removal of historic fabric to the extent proposed, would not be outweighed by public benefits.

Conclusion

35. The proposal would be contrary to the provisions of the Act and the development plan. The less than substantial harm identified to these heritage assets would not be outweighed by public benefits. I therefore conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

AJ Mageean

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Alan Johnson	St Georges Church representative
David Cullingford	St Georges Church representative
Bill Apedaile	St Georges Church representative

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Simon Parkin	Historic Buildings Officer, Newcastle City Council
Stephen Edwards	Planning Officer, Newcastle City Council

DOCUMENTS

- 1 Council's Statement of the current position regarding the Development Allocations Plan.
- 2 Appellants Photographs relating to extensions to historic ecclesiastical and other buildings.