



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 March 2020 by Andreea Spataru BA (Hons) MA

Decision by Jonathan Hockley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/G2815/D/19/3242509

Ashley Farm House, Main Street, Upper Benefield PE8 5AN

- 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 Thomas Crewe against the decision of the East Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01453/FUL, dated 13 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is a garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the setting of Ashley Farm House, a Grade II listed building, and whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Upper Benefield Conservation Area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. Ashley Farm House is a grade II listed building, located on the southern side of Main Street, in the Upper Benefield Conservation Area (UBCA). The appeal dwelling is well set-back from the road and has a private drive and open space to the front. It also has a stone wall and wooden gate to the front.
 5. Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) require me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area and preserving the setting of the listed building. In this respect national policy on heritage assets is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). At paragraph 192, it sets out matters which should be taken into account including sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage assets and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
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6. The character of the UBCA along the Main Street is largely defined by a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties of various ages and scale; their siting in relation to the road also varies. The neighbouring properties located on the southern side of Main Street, immediately to the west of the appeal site, as well as the farm buildings located to the east, follow the building line of the farmhouse and have large open space to the front. Clear building lines and open space are therefore features that make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the UBCA.
7. The listing states that the two storey Ashley Farm House dates from the late 17th century, was raised in the late 18th century and extended in the 19th century. The building is constructed in coursed limestone with a slate roof. The property has a prominent gabled cross wing breaking forward towards the road. A linear single-story outbuilding is attached to the left. The significance of the property derives from its age, materials and prominent position within the village.
8. As defined within the Framework, the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced. In this case, the farmhouse can be most readily appreciated from the land immediately surrounding the building, particularly when viewed from Main Street, and the open space at the front of the farmhouse makes a positive contribution to its setting.
9. The proposed detached pitched roofed double garage would be located to the front of the farmhouse, next to the western side boundary, and would occupy part of this open space. Although the garage would be set-back from the road and sunken approximately 600mm into the ground, it would occupy a prominent position within the street scene and would introduce a solid structure in an open setting. Moreover, sited in front of the building line established by the host property, its gabled cross wing, and neighbouring buildings, the garage would appear as a discordant feature. While I note the views of the Council's Conservation Officer, I am also of the view that the inappropriateness of the garage would be accentuated by its timber and blue slate materials, as these would be in contrast with the coursed limestone and Collyweston slate roof of the listed farmhouse, drawing the eye away from the heritage asset. Accordingly, the development would appear as an incongruous addition which would be harmful to both the setting of the listed building and the appearance of the UBCA.
10. In terms of the approach set out in the Framework, due to the scale of the proposal the harm to the significance of both the heritage assets would be less than substantial. In such cases, harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal in accordance with paragraph 196 of the Framework. The benefits of the scheme would appear to be solely private and hence do not outweigh the harm that I have found.
11. Accordingly, the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of Ashley Farm House and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the UBCA and as such would not meet the statutory requirements of the Act. Furthermore, the development would be contrary to Policy 2 (a) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (2016) which states that development should conserve and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets.

Other matters

12. I note the appellant's comments regarding the conduct of the Council and their belief that permission was to be granted for the proposal when considering that the Council's Conservation Officer and the Parish Council did not object to the scheme. I also note the history of the site and understand that the appeal proposal is a revised scheme which is smaller in scale than previous proposals. Nevertheless, I have considered the appeal on its own merits and found above that the proposal would cause harm to the significance of the listed building and the UBCA.

Recommendation

13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andreea Spataru

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR