



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2020

by William Cooper BA (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/T2405/D/20/3246967

14 Coventry Road, Narborough LE19 2GR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Russell Hamilton against the decision of Blaby District Council.
 - The application Ref: 19/1190/HH, dated 28 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is creation of a vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description in the banner heading above is taken from the appeal form as it more succinctly describes the proposal than that shown on the application form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - a) whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Narborough Conservation Area (CA), and preserve the setting of the Grade II Listed buildings 'The Corner House and Garden Wall Attached to the East, 9 Coventry Road' and '11 and 13 Coventry Road' (the LBs), and
 - b) the effect of the proposed development on highway safety.

Reasons

Background

4. The planning history of the site is acknowledged, specifically the application¹ for demolition of the boundary wall and gate and erection of wooden gates to provide off-road parking, which was refused in 2011, and subsequently dismissed at appeal. Adverse impact on prominent high boundary walling which provides an important sense of enclosure in the CA was a key consideration in the above decisions.

¹ Application Ref: 11/0402/1/PY.

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site comprises a Victorian 'villa' style dwelling located in a terraced row within the CA. The CA covers a corridor of land which runs through Narborough between the railway line and B4114 road. A Conservation Area Appraisal has not been provided. However, from what I have observed and read, the CA's significance lies in the pattern of historic properties set along, and leading off from, both sides of the 'spine' of Coventry Road and Leicester Road. Older, high garden boundary walls facing onto the spine, a number of which are distinguished by pedestrian gateways of some ornamentation, are a distinctive characteristic of the area. They contribute a layer of tradition and intimacy of architectural scale to the CA's streetscape.
6. Furthermore, the site is within the setting of the following LBs which are located nearby, across the street from the proposed access: 'The Corner House and Garden Wall Attached to the East, 9 Coventry Road', which is a 18th and 19th century building of red brick construction; and '11 and 13 Coventry Road' which is a 19th century remodelling of an earlier building, in red brick.
7. The site comprises the yard of the penultimate property of a terraced row of dwellings with outriggers, located towards the eastern end of the stretch of road described above. The site is located towards the western end of the CA, along a stretch of Coventry Road between Cutters Close and Desford Road. The northern boundary walling is at a focal point location, given the site's proximity to a mini-roundabout on a road travelling out of the village centre, and the field of vision around this 'node'.
8. The appearance of the northern elevation of the appeal property and the adjoining property at No 10 Coventry Road is unified by red, Flemish bond brickwork, which flows across the elevations of the buildings and the walls that enclose the yards. The pair of arched pedestrian gateways set within the northern boundary wall of the appeal property and No 10, along with these properties' outriggers, provide a distinctive recurrence of elements.
9. Through the above factors, the northern boundary of the appeal site contributes positively to the significance of the CA by contributing to the historic sense of enclosure, proportionality and character along the spine of the CA.
10. The proposal would more than double the width of aperture in the wall, to provide access to off-street parking for two cars. It is proposed to clad the gates in brick slips to match the surrounding brickwork, and incorporate a 'dummy' wooden pedestrian gate. The gates would be electrically powered and open inwards.
11. The appellant considers that the proposal would maintain the height and appearance of the existing boundary wall, and sense of enclosure along Coventry Road. However, there is not substantive evidence to persuade me that the brick slip external cladding would adhere to the gates over time in a sufficiently enduring way to match the robustness of the characteristic brick walling around it, and be convincing in the longer term. Moreover, there is a significant risk that the gates would be left open several times a day in this prominent location, for convenience of access and/or in the event of the electric mechanism failing. Given their probable regularity of use, closure of the

- gates would be impracticable to monitor and unenforceable through a planning condition.
12. The noticeable step up in scale of aperture from pedestrian gate to vehicle gates would disrupt the distinctive architectural rhythm of the eastern end of the host stretch of Coventry Road. Consequently, the historic sense of enclosure, proportionality of aperture and distinctiveness of solid, mature red brickwork towards the northern end of the host pair of properties, and in the vicinity, would be eroded.
 13. My attention is drawn to openings for car access for off-street parking in boundaries of other properties on Coventry Road. However, cumulatively with these and in its own right, the proposal would form an incongruous addition to the CA, and erode the distinctive sense of historic garden enclosure and pedestrian-scale gated entrances along the spine of the CA.
 14. Given the site's proximity to the village centre and railway station, it is unlikely that the proposal would significantly reduce the impression of parked cars in the area. Notwithstanding this, cars parked in the property's yard and crossing its boundary would exacerbate the erosion of historic character in the CA.
 15. The combination of adverse effects described above would be prominently visible from the road and pavement on Coventry Road, and other streets which converge at the nearby mini-roundabout to the east. The effects would also be visible within the setting of the LBs.
 16. The appellant considers that the proposal would result in minimal harm. Nevertheless, for the reasons outlined above, the totality of identified harm to the CA and setting of the LBs would be significant, relative to the site and its immediate surroundings. The effect would be localised and therefore constitute less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA as a whole. In such circumstances I necessarily weigh the harm against the public benefits of the proposal.
 17. With regard to the above, the proposal would provide off-street parking for two cars at the site, with potential for electric vehicle charging to be installed. The proposed drop kerb access would take out an on-street parking space, and given the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in place in the vicinity of the site, the potential gain in on-street parking capacity would be contained to one additional vehicle between 6pm and 8am Monday to Saturday. Whilst the proposal would provide private benefit to occupiers of the appeal property, public benefits in respect of parking stress, highway safety and electric vehicle charging potential are limited by the scale of the development proposed.
 18. Whilst some repointing could be done to the wall, during my site visit I did not see obvious evidence of significant visual or structural deficiency in the walling. Nor am I persuaded that the proposal is the only viable way to maintain the boundary brickwork and gate in good condition.
 19. Consequently, the public benefits do not outweigh the great weight given to the conservation of the CA and the setting of the LBs and the less than substantial harm to its significance which I have identified.
 20. In conclusion, the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. It would therefore conflict with Policies CS2 and CS20 of the Blaby District Core Strategy (2013) and Policies DM1 and

DM12 of the Blaby District Local Plan Delivery Development Plan Document (2019) (DDPD). Together, the policies seek to ensure that development is of appropriate design and appearance to preserve or enhance the historic environment. The policies are broadly consistent with the approach of the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, with great weight given to the asset's conservation.

Highway safety

21. The boundary of the appeal property is set on a slight kink in Coventry Road, which has fairly narrow pavements in places. During the site visit I saw that Coventry Road had a light but steady flow of vehicle traffic, and some pedestrian and cyclist movement, in both directions, albeit at a 'snapshot' in time. While the TRO limits parking in places, on-street parking in resident permit bays to the west is evident. The Council indicates that the site is on a regular walking route to the nursery and primary school in the village.
22. The mainly residential road has a 30mph speed limit. While acknowledging that the proposal would not accord with the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide (LHDG) standards in respect of visibility splays, the Local Highway Authority (LHA) does not object to the proposal, subject to a planning condition requiring inward-only opening gates. LHA evidence indicates a low road accident rate in the vicinity, hitherto.
23. Nevertheless, the proposal would result in a 'blind spot' for drivers edging out of the yard across the pavement towards Coventry Road - in either forward or reverse gear. The drivers would have limited visibility of approaching pedestrians, including vulnerable users.
24. Taking the above together, I conclude that the proposal would result in an unacceptable, localised safety risk to pedestrians. There is not substantive pedestrian flow data or detailed vehicle manoeuvring analysis, for example, before me to persuade me to the contrary. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policy DM8 of the DDPD, which seeks to ensure that development is appropriately designed, including meeting LHDG standards.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

25. Bringing matters together, I have found that the proposal would harm highway safety. Furthermore, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area, and the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework establishes that when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. As set out above, I have determined that the public benefits of the proposal are insufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm that would be caused to the significance of heritage assets. Accordingly, I confirm that overall, the benefits of the proposal are insufficient to outweigh the totality of the harm which I have identified in relation to the main issues in this case.
26. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

William Cooper INSPECTOR