
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 July 2020

by Kenneth Stone BSC Hons DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 13 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/19/3240924

Glebe House, 5 Watling Street, St Albans AL1 2PY

- 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 & Mrs S Beckson against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/19/1597, dated 21 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as an 'external spa pool with associated plant enclosure and external paving'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for an external spa pool with associated plant enclosure and external paving at Glebe House, 5 Watling Street, St Albans AL1 2PY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 5/19/1597, dated 21 June 2019, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: J1620/P01, J1620/P02 Rev B and J1620/P03 Rev B.
 - 3) Prior to the construction of the above ground parts of the development, including the hard landscaping, pool covering and pool plant housing, details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the above ground parts of the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issue

2. Whether the proposed development would preserve the grade II listed building known as Glebe House, 5 Watling Street, or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

3. Glebe House is noted in the list description as an early C18 house of 2 storeys. Both the appellant and Council draw attention to factors which suggest that the

property has developed over time and that it could have an earlier C17 date. There have been later C19 alterations and a recent conservatory erected in 2012.

4. The property derives its significance from the physical evidence of construction techniques providing evidential value and architectural features which add to its aesthetic value. The property has been in residential occupation and provides historical and communal value in terms of evidence of the growth and occupation of the St Stephens area.
5. The plot of land within which the property is located is greater in size than its original boundaries which were constrained to close to the width of the original property. There is little visible evidence of this within the plot although it is suggested a part of an existing privet hedge may demark part of that boundary, albeit this has not been confirmed. The present plot has been substantially extended to the east and provides the building with a large open curtilage. This area to the east may well have previously been open land and thereby contributed to the setting of the building within an open surrounding. Whilst it is evident the curtilage has altered over time setting is also not a fixed matter and the surroundings in which the building would be experienced have changed. In the context of this building that part of the setting which contributes to the significance of the heritage asset is the large garden area providing it with a sense of a large residential property in an open setting. The larger garden protects that setting.
6. The Council have identified the historic setting, that being the narrower original plot as contributing to the significance and whilst this has historical significance and contributes to the understanding of the building there is little visible evidence of it available which could be appreciated or understood.
7. The proposed development would provide for a new pool set to the south of the listed building beyond a recent conservatory that has been added to the building. The pool would be predominantly set into the ground with a limited projection above ground level. There would be a narrow paving surround and inset tracks on which a wooden pool covering could run to enclose the pool when not in use. The overall appearance would be a limited low level decking appearance when the cover was closed and a slightly more extended area of development when open. There would be little intrusion in terms of visibility from many locations within the site and it would not appear intrusive or distract from the appearance of the listed building. In the views where the pool would be most visible in association with the house these would be viewing the listed building with the recent conservatory addition to the listed building in a prominent position and interrupting or intruding into much of that view.
8. The proposed development would be a modest alteration close to ground level that would have a limited physical impact on views or appreciation of the listed building and which would not detract from the significance of that heritage asset. The pool plant housing is set well away from the listed building and is very modest in scale and discreetly located.
9. No views of the proposed development would be visible from outside the curtilage of the property which is secured behind a modern brick wall to Watling Street and fencing and landscaping around other boundaries. There would be no impact on the wider setting.

10. For the reasons given above I conclude that the proposed development would preserve the grade II listed building known as Glebe House, 5 Watling Street, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses. Consequently it would not conflict with Policy 86 (Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest) of the St. Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 which reflect the statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting.

Other matters

11. Glebe house is located within the St Albans Conservation Area. This is a relatively extensive area covering much of central St Albans to incorporate the development of the settlement. The appeal site is located within a walled garden with limited views into the site. Given the nature and scale of development and that the primary use of the property remains there is no impact on the Conservation area's character or appearance which would therefore be preserved.

Overall conclusions and conditions

12. The proposed development would not conflict with the development plan and there would be no harm to the listed building or conservation area which would be preserved. The development should therefore be approved as it is in accordance with the development and there are no other material considerations indicating a decision otherwise would be appropriate.
13. A condition in respect of the approved plans is appropriate to ensure clarity for the development. A condition in respect of materials is necessary given the sensitivity of the site. Given the nature of the development this does not need to be a pre-commencement condition but can require details at a later stage.
14. Whilst the officer report refers to a potential archaeological interest the Local Planning Authority do not request an archaeological condition in the questionnaire. There is limited evidence provided of the potential to affect archaeological remains and the Officer Report acknowledges the development is limited and at a distance from previously known buried archaeology. Given the tests for a condition it has not been demonstrated that a condition is necessary and as no condition has been suggested there is no degree of precision as to what it should cover. I have therefore not attached such a condition.
15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Kenneth Stone

INSPECTOR