The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 July 2020

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MIEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/20/3248554
The White House, Sawley Road, Sawley BB7 4LE

- 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 Monaghan against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
- The application Ref 3/2019/0975, dated 18 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 January 2020.
- The development proposed is the alteration of the principal elevation to include the construction of a single storey porch and two storey gabled elevation. The works will include the addition of a replacement conservatory with decked terrace to the south west of the property.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including Sawley Conservation Area and the setting of Listed Buildings.

Reasons

3. The White House is a modern detached dwelling finished in white render with a pitched roof. It is in the Sawley Conservation Area (the CA), the significance of which derives in part from its historic and listed buildings and its landscape setting. The property is set back from the road between a single storey dwelling and Arches Cottages, a Grade II listed building comprising a pair of historic stone-built dwellings with features including mullioned windows, chamfered stone surrounds and a Tudor-arched doorhead. On the opposite side of the road is Sawley Abbey, a ruined Cistercian Abbey dating from 1147 that retains extensive upstanding medieval remains and undisturbed earthworks. The Abbey is a Grade I listed building and a Scheduled Monument, which are historic assets of the highest significance.

4. Where proposals affect Conservation Areas, Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that, in the exercise of any function under the Planning Acts, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

5. In respect of listed buildings, Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

6. The Framework advises that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The significance of the asset can be harmed or lost as a result of the alteration or destruction of the asset or from development within its setting. In this respect, and although relatively simple in design, The White House is one of several prominent modern buildings that are acknowledged to compete visually and detract from the setting of Sawley Abbey.

7. The proposal, with its prominent front extension and gable, roof lights and extensive timber cladding, would be an overtly contemporary and incongruous form of development in this part of the street. It would be a dominant feature that would be discordant when viewed in juxtaposition with the neighbouring listed building. It would distract attention and it would detract from the ability to appreciate the nearby listed buildings including the Scheduled Monument. Therefore, the proposal would make a negative contribution to the setting of the neighbouring Grade II and Grade I listed buildings and Scheduled Monument. It would fail to sustain or enhance the setting, and hence the significance, of the designated heritage assets.

8. Although it would be screened in part by the front boundary treatment, the extensions and alterations to the front of the property would be visible from locations along the road and from the grounds of Sawley Abbey. From surrounding locations, including more distant views towards the CA, the increased mass of the building and its roof extensions would be a visually obtrusive feature in the townscape. The increase in the bulk of the building and its contemporary appearance would not be in keeping with the traditional historic character and appearance of the CA. Consequently, it would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the heritage asset. However, it would be modest in the context of the CA as a whole and consequently it would result in less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset.

9. By virtue of the harm to the CA and the setting of listed buildings and the Scheduled Monument, the proposal would conflict with policies in the Framework that recognise heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and which seek to ensure that they are conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. Although the harm would be less than substantial, the proposal would conflict with Policies EN5, DME4 and DMG1 of Ribble Valley Borough Council Core Strategy 2008-2028 Adopted December 2014. These require, among other things, that proposals should protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.

10. Paragraph 196 of the Framework states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, the appeal property is a private dwelling and there would be no public benefits. Therefore, taking account of the considerable importance and weight that must be given to any harm to heritage assets, I find that the harm

to the significance of the CA and the listed buildings would outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

Other Matters

11. The parties engaged within one another at the pre-application stage and during the processing of the application. A heritage assessment was provided and the proposals were amended, including through a reduction in the extent of glazing and timber cladding. Nevertheless, the amendments were not sufficient to overcome the conflict with the development plan.

12. Although Historic England did not object to the proposal, neither did it support it. The absence of comments does not weigh in favour of the scheme.

13. The proposal would provide an opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of the property. While this would contribute towards the sustainability objectives of the Framework, it seems likely that similar benefits could be achieved by alternative proposals that would avoid the conflict with the development plan.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would be in conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR