



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 April 2021

by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/W/20/3259756

Akeman Business Park, Akeman Street, Tring HP23 6AF

- 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 Akeman Tring Limited against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00818/FUL, dated 1 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing dilapidated drying shed and construction of 2no. two bedroom houses with parking, gardens and all ancillary works - the works also includes roadway improvements/alterations to those approved under permission 4/02850/18/FUL.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character or appearance of the Tring Conservation Area, including whether the loss of the non-designated heritage asset is justified.

Reasons

3. The site is part of Tring Conservation Area (the CA), which derives its significance in part from its industrial past, including the diversification from predominantly weaving to more varied industry in the late nineteenth century. The Council's draft Tring Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals notes that in the nineteenth century Akeman Street was a commercial and industrial area on a small scale, and it retains that character. I see no reason to disagree with this assessment. In accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA
4. The wider Akeman Business Park site has been granted permission for residential redevelopment. The drying shed is at the edge of the site and is a remnant of the wider site's historic employment and industrial use. While the drying shed is not a listed building, and has undergone modifications since first built, the date of its construction coincides with the local diversification in industry. It therefore contributes to the understanding of the history of the site and the wider CA and is a non-designated heritage asset.
5. The submitted structural report indicates that the drying shed has structural issues including deteriorating materials and unplanned alterations and repairs.

The report concludes that relocation or renovation of the shed is unlikely to be economic given its condition and limited potential uses. The appellants further contend that there is no opportunity to relocate the building within the site due to the condition of the building, and that the condition of the shed could be recorded, and it saved for future reuse.

6. I do not doubt that the relocation of the drying shed would be difficult and costly, but its removal would result in the loss of significance arising from its historic association with the industrial heritage of the site. While the shed is not attractive, and I do not find that its removal would be harmful to the appearance of the CA, there would be a loss of historic character because of the development.
7. The harm to the significance of the CA would be limited to that loss of historic character and would be experienced principally in the immediate vicinity of the site. It would therefore amount to less than substantial harm. The National Planning Policy Framework advises that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to less than substantial harm to its significance. This harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
8. In addition, the removal of the drying barn from the site would result in the loss of a non-designated heritage asset. A balanced judgment is therefore necessary having regard to the scale of any harm or loss, and the significance of the drying shed.
9. The development would deliver two new houses, supporting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. This is a public benefit and attracts additional weight given that there is a shortfall in the Council's supply of housing land.
10. Set against this is the great weight to be given to the harm to the CA and the need to form a balanced judgment regarding the loss of the drying barn. In this instance relocating the drying barn within the site would be difficult and costly. However, it is not clear from the evidence before me how extensive the investigations into relocation have been, nor whether the cost or difficulty would be so great as to be prohibitive. Given the importance of the drying barn as a non-designated heritage asset and its contribution to the significance of the CA I therefore consider a precautionary approach to be justified in this instance.
11. I therefore find that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character of the CA and the unjustified loss of a non-designated heritage asset. It would conflict with the requirements of the Act and with Policy CS27 of the Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy 2006-2031 which requires that the integrity, setting and distinctiveness of designated and undesignated heritage assets be protected, conserved and if appropriate enhanced.

Conclusion

12. There are no material considerations that in this instance indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, for the reasons set out above, the appeal fails.

M Chalk

INSPECTOR