
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 7 June 2021

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 June 2021

Appeal A: APP/C1625/W/20/3263908

Southfield House, Vicarage Street, Painswick GL6 6XU

- 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 Alistair Jollans against the decision of Stroud District Council.
 - The application Ref S.20/1762/HHOLD, dated 25 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as removal of substandard and defective entrance door, and side window, small pitched roof over, and defective mullion window to first floor office, within infill facade between two existing main gables. Provision of new glazed double doors, vertical structural glass infill over, and inclined full width roof light.
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Appeal B: APP/C1625/Y/20/3263907

Southfield House, Vicarage Street, Painswick GL6 6XU

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Alistair Jollans against the decision of Stroud District Council.
 - The application Ref S.20/1763/LBC, dated 25 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 October 2020.
 - The works proposed are described as removal of substandard and defective entrance door, and side window, small pitched roof over, and defective mullion window to first floor office, within infill facade between two existing main gables. Provision of new glazed double doors, vertical structural glass infill over, and inclined full width roof light.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

3. As set out above, there are 2 appeals on this site. Each relates to the same scheme but they address separate applications for planning permission in the case of Appeal A, and listed building consent in the case of Appeal B. I have considered each on its individual merits, however, to avoid duplication I have dealt with the Appeals together, except where otherwise indicated.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the scheme would preserve a Grade II listed building, Southwick House, its setting, or any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

5. The listed building is a large house of C17th origin. Insofar as it is relevant to the Appeals, the special interest and significance of the listed building resides in its age and its architectural character. Considered externally, the rear elevation appears to be the most interesting. This is constructed from coursed stone rubble, and features 2 large projecting gabled wings, with a narrower gabled wing recessed between. Windows are casements with hood moulds, and the architectural character is on the whole generally consistent with the C17th date of the building. Photographic evidence nonetheless shows that the rear elevation has undergone a number of historic phases of alteration, one of the most significant of which was during the 1930s. The latter included widening of the window opening whose removal is now proposed, and remodelling of the left hand wing as viewed from the rear. Considered as they exist at present, the fact that such past works appear generally compatible with the architectural character of the building as a whole, is of note.
6. The scheme would see the central recess between the 2 larger projecting wings enclosed in glass between ground and first floor levels. This would see removal of what appears to have once been a porch at ground floor level, and removal of the rear wall and window of the central wing at first floor level. As the original back wall has already been removed at ground floor level, the works would leave the central wing without a solid back wall between the ground and first floors.
7. Set against the above assessment, the substantial glazed construction and low-pitched roof form of the extension would not directly integrate with the existing form, design and construction of the rear elevation. Nor would the open-ended exposure of ground and first floor rooms within the extension, highlighting as this would the loss of fabric, solidity and integrity of the central wing. Viewed in combination with the prominent positioning of the extension between the two larger wings, and in front of that at the centre, the extension, and related modifications to the building fabric, would as such appear acutely incongruous. This would obscure and detract from appreciation of the historic architectural character of the building, thus failing to preserve its special interest and to conserve its significance.
8. The former porch is itself a past addition which in this instance is poorly detailed, and, as noted above, the window is not in its original form. The latter may nonetheless incorporate some older fabric, and is otherwise similar in character to other windows within the rear elevation. Though in both regards scope may well exist to better reveal the significance of the listed building through sensitive alterations, this would clearly not be achieved by the scheme proposed.
9. Structural issues relating to the previous removal of the original back wall at ground floor level have been identified, as too has the poor condition of the window. The two issues are at least partly related. Some fabric loss and replacement may inevitably result from remedial works. Given the important role that sensitive remedial work can play in sustaining significance, this would not however be generally considered unacceptable where soundly justified. The possible impact of remedial works does not therefore justify the broader and quite different adverse effects of the appeal scheme.

10. Examples of glazed additions to historic buildings elsewhere have been identified. The buildings in question are however of wholly different character to Southfield House, as too are the ways in which glazing has been used. Consequently, these examples do not lend any direct support for the appeal proposal.
11. The appellant states that the extension would be 'of its time' and contribute to the ongoing evolution of the building. In terms of its design, and as a simple statement of fact, I agree. However, this in itself provides no obvious justification for the harm that the scheme would cause.
12. In view of my findings above, the scheme would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building. As such it would conflict with the expectations of the Act, and with paragraphs 193 and 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which set out the great weight to be attached to the conservation of designated heritage assets, and the need for clear and convincing justification for any harm.
13. With further reference to paragraph 196 of the Framework, I find that the harm caused to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial. Such harm attracts great weight. In accordance with paragraph 196 it is necessary to balance this harm against the public benefits advanced in favour of the appeal scheme.
14. In this case the extension would solely serve to benefit the occupants. As this would be a private benefit, it attracts no weight. Constructing the extension would generate a small amount of work for contractors. Any benefit to the broader economy would thus be negligible, and as such attracts no more than negligible weight. Consequently, the public benefits of the scheme would not outweigh the harm that it would cause. This is a consideration which indicates that the Appeals should both be dismissed.
15. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the scheme would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building. With regard to Appeal A, and insofar as it is relevant to Appeal B, the scheme would thus conflict with Policy ES10 of the Stroud District Local Plan which seeks to preserve, protect or enhance Stroud District's historic environment. With regard to both Appeal A and Appeal B, the scheme would otherwise fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, and heritage policy set out within the Framework.

Other Matters

16. The site is located in Painswick Conservation Area (the Conservation Area). This is acknowledged by the Council, but has not been explicitly addressed by either party within their submissions. In view of the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Act, which is applicable to applications for listed building consent and planning permission alike, it is however necessary for me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
17. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal, the significance of the Conservation Area resides in the historic layout of the settlement, and the rich collection and interrelationship of historic buildings and spaces that it contains. This clearly reflects the past prosperity of Painswick, as is further reflected in the good

collection of large historic houses it contains. Within this context the listed building makes an important positive contribution.

18. Whilst the rear elevation of the building is exposed within the broader landscape setting of the settlement, clear visibility of the proposed extension would not extend much beyond the limits of the extensive plot upon which the building stands. The adverse effects of the scheme as outlined above would not therefore be openly perceived by the public. Be that as it may, the Conservation Area is a sum of both its public and private parts. In causing harm to the significance of the listed building, the works would thus also cause harm the contribution that the listed building makes to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole. The harm caused would again be less than substantial, but in this instance, it would attract considerable importance and weight.
19. I am mindful of the fact that the effect of the scheme on the Conservation Area was not a reason for refusal of either application. However, notwithstanding the additional weight that the identified harm lends in favour of dismissing the Appeals, this does not alter the outcome of my findings in relation to paragraph 196 of the Framework set out above. Similarly, the additional conflict that a failure to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area would cause in relation to the Act, the Framework and Policy ES10, does not alter the outcome of my conclusion in relation to the main issue. As such the matter is not determinative of the outcome of this appeal. I am therefore satisfied that the interests of neither party are prejudiced by my findings.
20. The site is located within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB), within which there is a further statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. As noted above, the rear elevation of the building is exposed within the broader landscape, from within which there are long views towards it. The scheme would not however entail any expansion of the footprint of the building, or otherwise appear prominent relative to its developed setting. This is despite some scope for reflective glare. That being so, I am satisfied that the natural beauty of the AONB would be conserved.

Conclusion

21. The scheme would cause unacceptable harm to the listed building. In relation to Appeal A, conflict thus arises with the development plan. There are no other considerations which alter or outweigh these findings. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that Appeals A and B should be dismissed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR