



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 3 November 2021

by E Worthington BA (Hons) MTP MUED MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd November 2021

Appeal A: APP/E2530/W/21/3271108

2 Welland Lodge, Water Street, Stamford, PE9 2NJ

- 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 Smith against the decision of South Kesteven District Council.
 - The application Ref S20/2126, dated 11 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'proposed extension and alterations to dwelling'.
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Appeal B: APP/E2530/Y/21/3271113

2 Welland Lodge, Water Street, Stamford, PE9 2NJ

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Smith against the decision of South Kesteven District Council.
 - The application Ref S20/2127, dated 11 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2021.
 - The works proposed are described as 'proposed extension and alterations to dwelling'.
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Decisions

Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

3. Since the proposal is in a conservation area and relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
 4. On the 20 July 2021 the government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Whilst this post-dates the Council's decisions and the date of the appeal forms, the main parties have prepared their cases for the appeals since its publication. On this basis, and since the revised Framework's approach to the main issues in this case has not altered significantly, I confirm that all references to the Framework in this decision are to the updated 2021 version.
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Main Issues

5. The main issues are whether the proposal would preserve a grade II listed building, South View, Welland Lodge (Ref: 1222365) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stamford Conservation Area.

Reasons

6. The appeal building is the former Stamford East Railway station built in 1856 and now converted into two houses. Built of ashlar limestone in a grand Jacobean style it is a handsome two storey building with two gabled wings and a distinctive three storey square tower at its rear south east corner. As well as the station facilities, the building incorporated the station master's house/accommodation and was designed by William Hurst in a style intended to echo the fine Tudor mansion at nearby Burghley House.
7. The building was the terminus of the Essendine branch line on the Great Northern Railway main line, and is a surviving feature of the town's second railway station. The former wooden platforms and a brick train shed that were historically located immediately to the rear of the building were removed some time ago. As a result, whilst it is not immediately recognisable as a railway station, I am mindful that like other stations of its time, it was purposely designed to have the outward appearance of a country house. It remains a striking and attractive example of a particular 19th century railway station building type. Thus it is expressive of the modern industrial age and Stamford's historical association with the railways, its social history, evolution and prosperity.
8. The appeal property comprises the southern half of the building including the tower. It has a single storey rear brick built lean-to conservatory with glazed windows and plastic roofing panels which is attached to the tower. Adjoining this is a tall wall incorporating a entrance gate which allows access to the rear garden area. This attaches to the flank wall of the neighbouring property in Welland Mews immediately to the east. The adjoining property in the other half of the listed building also has a rear conservatory style addition and a boundary wall has been constructed between the rear gardens of the two properties. Nevertheless, despite its conversion and these later additions, the building retains its grand character and appearance as an impressive Gothic Revival railway station building.
9. Given the above, I find the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to comprise its distinctive historic architectural design, including the features, openings and materials associated with the fabric of the rear elevation and the characteristic tower feature, along with its historic interest as an important purpose built railway station.
10. The appeal property is also within the Stamford Conservation Area which covers much of the central area of the town. Its historic and architectural significance is derived from Stamford's long history as a settlement and role as a market town. It displays a wide range of fine architecture and its medieval street pattern remains intact including in the St Martin's area and Water Street where the appeal building is located.

11. The appeal building is prominent in Water Street adjacent to the river Welland where views eastwards terminate with its attractive façade at the junction with Welland Mews. As set out above, it reflects the growth of the town in the 19th century and the important role of the railway in the town's history. As such, it contributes positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area and its significance as a heritage asset in relation to these appeals.
12. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing conservatory and the adjacent tall wall. The Council finds this development to be of no historic significance and raises no objection to its removal. I concur with this view.
13. That said, as things stand, the existing conservatory projects only modestly forward of the north elevation of the building's tower element into the appeal property's rear garden area. As such it allows the existing historic fabric, openings and architectural features on the building's rear/eastern elevation to be seen. These include a number of openings at ground and first floor level along with a decorative stone star shaped plaque. As a result, despite this more recent addition, the building's rear elevation remains clearly legible.
14. In contrast, the appeal proposal would introduce a bulkier single storey flat roof extension. Whilst it would be built in ashlar stone to match the existing, and would not be large in relation to the size of the building overall, it would be much deeper than the existing extension and would extend northwards from the flank elevation of the tower to take up a good deal of the rear garden area. In doing so it would also cover much of the building's rear/eastern elevation at ground floor level and obscure the existing opening there which incorporates French doors with a stone lintel and surrounds.
15. Furthermore, the flat roof of the extension would incorporate a roof terrace with an obscure glass balustrade to prevent overlooking of the adjoining property. Despite its glass construction, by its nature and purpose it would not be transparent. As a result it would add considerably to the height and bulk of the extension. It would also mean that the proposal would be in part located in front of the building's first floor rear window and so would interrupt the visibility of that opening.
16. Additionally, a new external metal staircase would be constructed and would extend along part of the tower's eastern elevation. The tower is a distinctive and important feature of the building, characteristic of its age and use. Whilst it would have a glass balustrade, the staircase would be located in an obvious and prominent location on the rear of the building on a wall which is currently free from development. By reason of its design and materials it would introduce a completely uncharacteristic and alien feature on the clean uninterrupted blank rear stone façade of the tower.
17. The proposal includes some glazed areas and would incorporate slimline heritage aluminium frames. I also note that the existing external walls that would be internalised as a result of the proposal would not be plastered such that the existing fabric would be retained. Additionally an existing plastered interior wall would be exposed back to its stone façade as part of the proposal. Whilst the appellant argues that there would be more stonework/exposed existing fabric visible than before, despite the glazed elements of the proposal, it would be for the most part behind the extension and so effectively internal to the building. Accordingly these works would do little to mitigate the visual impact of the proposal overall.

18. Having regard to all these matters, despite the removal of the existing conservatory and wall, and appreciating that the proposal would be attached to the building via steel and posts, I consider that it would be an unacceptably large and discordant addition that would have an awkward relationship with the building. It would conceal much of the historic fabric and openings on the rear wall of the building and, in the staircase, would introduce a competing and obscuring feature to its tower element. Its overwhelming scale and intrusive design incorporating the modern domestic features of the roof terrace and external staircase, along with the use of uncharacteristic materials including etched glass and metal, would seriously detract from the host building. Whilst not raised by the Council, in my view the extension's portal window feature would compound its wholly unsatisfactory visual impact and inherently poor design.
19. As a consequence the proposal would result in an incongruous addition that would undermine the building's distinctive architectural form and diminish its intended grandeur and importance. It would also detract from the sense of the building's historic purpose as a railway station and erode further the ability to appreciate it as such. This being so it would impair the building's historic legibility and significance and fail to preserve its special interest. That the rear of the building is in an enclosed garden area and is not widely visible does not affect my findings. Listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
20. Turning to its effect on the conservation area, I acknowledge that the proposal would be to the rear of the building which is for the most part obscured from view by the adjacent property to the east. However, despite the proximity of the adjacent property and the vegetation on the boundary, some views of the external staircase would be possible from public vantage points in Welland Mews. This being so, and since I have found that the building contributes to the character and appearance of the conservation area, I therefore consider that it would cause some harm to its significance and would fail to preserve its character and appearance.
21. The appellant indicates that when the building was in use as a train station there was a balcony immediately above the platform bay to its rear, as well as a covered train hall along the platform which would have further obscured the building's rear elevation. No further details or evidence of these structures have been provided. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the previous existence of development to the building's rear elevation, these have since been removed. Moreover, in contrast to the appeal proposal they were in any event structures directly related to the historic function of the building as a railway station. As such, I do not regard this matter to justify the appeal schemes.
22. Reference is also made to other examples of external staircases in the immediate vicinity of the appeal property. Although the addresses of these are given, I have seen no further details relating to these, including whether the host properties are listed and if they were the subject of planning applications. As such, I cannot be sure that the circumstances that led to those existing developments are the same as in the case before me. Accordingly, since it has not been demonstrated that they are comparable to the appeal proposal, which I have in any event considered on its individual merits, they do not justify the appeals before me.

23. Taking all these factors into account, I therefore conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and the significance of the conservation area. I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the balance of these appeals.
24. The proposal would be contrary to Policy DE1 of the South Kesteven Local Plan (Local Plan) which requires proposals to make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness, vernacular and character of the area and to be of an appropriate scale, density, massing, height and material, given the context of the area (a). Additionally, it would be at odds with Local Plan Policy EN6 which seeks to protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.
25. The Framework advises at paragraph 199 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. I find the harm to the listed building to be less than substantial in this instance, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 202 requires that less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
26. The appellant indicates that the existing conservatory is rotten, damp and leaking and has come to the end of its life. I also understand that the proposal would be built to the highest thermal performance. Additional improvements would also be made to the building including the replacement of the existing plastic drainpipes with cast-iron pipe work along with the re-sealing in ashlar stone cladding of an existing stone mullion window that the appellant indicates is currently sealed up in brickwork.
27. However, I have seen no evidence to suggest that the conservatory could not be repaired (and made more thermally efficient) rather than completely replaced, or that the benefits outlined could not be gained from a more modest addition. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that the additional improvement works referred to are necessarily dependent on the appeal proposal. As such, I give any public benefits arising from these matters very little weight. No other public benefits have been put forward which would outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets I have identified.
28. For these reasons the proposed development and works would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 197 of the Framework and would be in conflict with the development plan.

Other Matters

29. The proposal includes some internal alterations which I understand are the subject of a subsequent application to the Council. This being so, and since I am dismissing the appeals in relation to the main issues, I have not considered this matter further.

Conclusion

30. For the above reasons, and taking all other matters raised into consideration, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

Elaine Worthington INSPECTOR