



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31st March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/21/3289765

The Coach House, 31 School Lane, Welwyn AL6 9PQ

- 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 Robin Whitby against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2021/1792/HOUSE, dated 1 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 23 November 2021.
 - The proposed development is for single storey rear extension, roof extension with rear dormer window, insertion of rooflights, internal alterations, landscaping and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - a) The impact of the proposals upon the setting and significance of nearby Grade II Listed Buildings 'New Place' and 'The Lodge'.
 - b) The impact of the proposals upon the significance of the appeal property which is identified as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.

Preliminary Matter

3. The Council considers the appeal property to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset as outlined within Paragraph 203 of The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework). They do not however consider the building to be a curtilage listed structure despite it seemingly being associated with the Grade II Listed 'New Place' previously. I have no evidence before me to differ from this point of view and as such have dealt with this appeal accordingly.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a former coach house and stable building associated with the nearby Grade II Listed 'New Place'. 'New Place' was designed around 1879-80 by Architect Phillip Webb for his brother and it appears that both The Coach House and the Grade II Listed 'The Lodge' were both associated with this building as ancillary structures.
5. The appeal property itself is an attractive asymmetrical building around an infilled courtyard, consisting of a larger frontage range and more modest single storey ranges to its rear. I consider the building contains some Arts and Crafts influences exhibited in the

building's simple pitched and half hipped roofs, use of pantiles and red bricks along with tall chimneys and other neo vernacular type details. The building has been modified over time through internal alterations and a side and infill extension into a former courtyard along with a gable first floor extension facing the street. Generally however, the building maintains its character as a former stable and coach house that would be typical of a building serving the estate of a house such as 'New Place'.

6. In considering whether to grant planning permission Sections 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The Framework also states that when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of the heritage asset, 'great weight' should be given to the asset's conservation.
7. Paragraph 203 of The Framework also states that the effect of an application on the significance of a Non-Designated Heritage Asset should also be taken into account in determining an application, where a balanced judgement will be required to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset. Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) as well as emerging policies SP1 and SP9 of the Council's Emerging Local Plan 2016, also reflect the aspirations for design quality and responsive design to the historic environment in light of proposed extensions to buildings.
8. I consider that both 'New Place' and 'The Lodge' exhibit high aesthetic, evidential and associative heritage values that are reflected in their Grade II Listed status. Such interest is determined through both the high quality architectural details, derived from the hand of a such a famous Architect as Phillip Webb, and the evidential values associated with this early example of Arts and Crafts domestic architecture located so close to one of the principal Garden Cities of the time. Despite the later development of much of the former gardens to 'New Place' the dominance and hierarchy of the estate remains and 'The Lodge' and The Coach House are synonymous with this character and special interest.
9. I consider that the significance of The Coach House is therefore intrinsically linked to that of both 'New Place' and 'The Lodge'. I have evidence before me for instance that The Coach House was constructed around the same time as 'The Lodge' and that it formed part of the ancillary uses associated with 'New Place', having served as the stables to the estate. I can also see on the late 19th century Ordnance Survey plans¹ that 'The Lodge' and The Coach House both flanked what appears to be the main driveway to 'New Place'. This was tree lined and skirted around the edge of an area of land that I consider is similar, if not the same, to that of the rear garden of the appeal property as it currently exists.
10. Architecturally too I consider that there are significant synergies between the three buildings on the site in terms of architectural forms, materials, bonding of brickwork and other architectural features. Although I consider that the architectural detailing of The Coach House is not perhaps of the higher quality of the nearby Listed Buildings.
11. In light of this I consider that the significance of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset, The Coach House, is defined both architecturally, associatively and through it being an estate building that was near contemporary with the nearby Listed Buildings. Moreover, although this relationship has been rather dramatically altered through the infill development within the grounds of 'New Place' in the 1980's, I consider that this

¹ Ordnance Survey Plans supplied by the Appellant within their Statement of Case.

relationship can still be understood and that the appeal site should be considered to be within the setting of both 'The Lodge' and 'New Place'.

12. I also consider that The Coach House exhibits interesting architectural forms and features that are not only related to the wider former estate, but are also interesting and attractive in their own right. This includes the low horizontal roof forms, projecting chimney stacks and somewhat quirky features such as possible taking in door and louvred vents to the roof.
13. In assessing the proposals before me I notice that the proposed extensions would be largely focussed upon the middle and the rear of the building. Although a previous planning approval permits the Appellant a fall-back position in the form of a rear extension and dormer, the proposals before me would see an altered design and the addition of more significant roof alterations.
14. The Appellant's appeal statement identifies the unbalanced character of the existing building, caused by the later first floor weatherboarded extension, as something that this proposal could rectify. I consider however, that despite this later addition, one element of interest in the building is its unbalanced and asymmetrical nature between the larger scale frontage range and the smaller, less substantial single storey courtyard ranges to the rear. Despite these elements having been infilled somewhat, the proposed modifications to the roof form would change this asymmetry and undermine the hierarchy between the frontage and rear ranges. In doing so the proposal causes harm to the interesting character and hierarchy of the building that is defined through such transitions.
15. Moreover, the proposal would substantially enlarge the building and in doing so would change the building's origin as an ancillary estate building. In so doing the historic relationship between 'New Place' and 'The Lodge' would be affected. Although there would be no danger of the subservience between the buildings being challenged, I do consider that the important ancillary character of lower scale, more rambling buildings associated with such an estate, would be undermined and as such the relationship between the Listed Buildings and their historic setting would be partially harmed.
16. In assessing this Less than Substantial Harm I cannot see any public benefits that would lead me to outweigh the harm I have identified above to both the character and appearance of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset and the harm to the setting of both 'The Lodge' and 'New Place'. As such I consider that the proposal is in conflict with Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) as well as the emerging policies SP1 and SP9 of the Council's Emerging Local Plan 2016.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons above, taking into account all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR