



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 July 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P4225/D/22/3299824

Belfry House, Vicarage Drive, Wardle, Rochdale OL16 2RQ

- 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 Harry Seed against the decision of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01668/HOUS, dated 24 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 March 2022.
 - The application is for proposed first floor side extension to dwelling house, excavation of garden at rear along with erection of single and two storey detached ancillary outbuilding to form garage, gym and summerhouse.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the proposed two storey detached ancillary outbuilding and planning permission is refused. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the first floor side extension to the existing house and planning permission is granted for the first floor side extension at Belfry House, Vicarage Drive, Wardle Rochdale in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/01668/HOUS, dated 24 November 2021 and the plans submitted with it, so far as is relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted and subject to the conditions as outlined in the Schedule below.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the Councils decision notice and slightly differs from that used on the Appellant's original application. In Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development is the same as that used by the Council and as such I have used this description accordingly which I feel represents the scope of the proposals similarly.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the setting and significance of the Grade II Listed Church of St John the Baptist.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a detached building whose origins derive from being upon the site of the former vicarage for the adjacent Grade II Listed Church of St John the Baptist. Much change appears to have occurred subsequently since the construction of the church in the early 19th century and nothing of the

original Vicarage appears to have been retained. Much of the former Parish Room however still survives and this single storey range, that now forms an extension to the existing dwellinghouse, contains several carved dedication stones to the building's original donors within its string course and quoins as well as a commemorative stone plaque. I consider that these elements of the building are of some historic significance.

5. The property is accessed from Halifax Road along a driveway that also serves the church. The house itself presents a side elevation in this direction and some immature trees and hedges separate the initial plot from the church's graveyard adjacent. The property's garden extends to the south east before being separated from Wheelwright Drive by a treed banking and remnants of a stone wall that presumably once formed the boundary also of the former vicarage.
6. The church of St John the Baptist was constructed in 1834 and sits adjacent to the appeal site. The church sits on slightly higher ground than many of its neighbours with its graveyard sloping gently to the south east where a stone wall also divides it from Wheelwright Drive beyond. The Listed Building exhibits several heritage values, not least those concerned with its high architectural quality of relatively early Neo Gothic design, its association with the Architect Lewis Vulliamy and its social connection associated with the wider community.
7. It appears from historic maps contained within the Appellant's appeal statement that the boundary of the church and vicarage originally bordered open fields and I saw on my site visit that that wide reaching views towards the Pennine hills could be obtained from here. Therefore, it appears likely that the church commanded views over the countryside prior to the construction of Wheelwright Drive in the 1990's.
8. The proposal before me seeks permission for two distinct elements. Firstly, the former Parish room is intended to be modified with a first floor extension that appears to retain much of the ground floor of the building and would construct a partial upward extension with rooms in the roof served by two pitched roof dormer windows.
9. Secondly the proposal intends to construct a new standalone building of three storeys within the garden to the south east of the property. From the driveway of the appeal property this structure would appear as a simple, single storey, detached garage as the ground floor would be sunk into the change of level over the site so as to disguise this level within the existing topography. The third level would constitute a room within the roof space of the building and as such the structure would appear as a red brick two storey building from most directions.
10. The elevation facing onto the churchyard would be completely brick and unarticulated whilst the opposite gable elevation would sport large areas of floor to ceiling windows that would give a modern appearance to what would otherwise be a fairly traditional looking building.
11. In considering whether to grant planning permission for any development 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 National Planning Policy Framework (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.

12. In this instance the main point of contention between the parties is the impact of the proposed new detached building upon the setting and significance of the Grade II Listed Building with particular emphasis upon the impact of the proposal upon views of the church from Wheelwright Drive. The proposed first floor extension to the former Parish room is not objected to by the Council.
13. In assessing the impact of the proposed building I saw on my site visit that, in summer at least, only a few glimpses of the church could be obtained from Wheelwright Drive whilst walking alongside the appeal property's boundary. As one moved further along this road more substantial views of the church became apparent and the standing of the church upon its slight rise in ground level became more obvious.
14. I also saw in the Appellant's appeal statement that in winter too only filtered views of the church are available from outside the appeal site. From within the churchyard I saw that the siting of the proposed building would mean that it would be visible from this view. Moreover, the proposed building would present a rather stark blank elevation onto the graveyard.
15. Notwithstanding whether the building would be visible or not, the proposed building would affect the immediate setting of the Listed Building. I consider therefore that there are two elements under consideration here. Firstly, the impact of the proposal upon the setting of the church and its subsequent understanding, and secondly the significance of views from Wheelwright Drive and the impact of a new building being introduced into this view.
16. It appears from the Appellant's statement that the church historically bounded open fields. As mentioned above, I consider therefore that part of the siting of the church was possibly related to a need for it to be visible and to stand above other buildings nearby perhaps to link communities farther afield. Obviously, the introduction of Wheelwright Drive has somewhat altered this perception, but the church is still seen as standing on higher ground, its modest tower giving extra prominence and where the church can be seen, even through filtered views, it remains a landmark building that dominates the area as it was perhaps always intended to do.
17. Through the introduction of a new building on this side of Wheelwright Drive, the church would be seen within the context of other structures to a much greater degree than it is today - or ever appears to have been in its history. Although other buildings now exist to the south east of the church along Wheelwright Drive, these are at least set down and retain the special setting and views of the church through being located on the opposite side of the road, thereby these views and the near isolated nature of the church are maintained.
18. Through the introduction of a new building of some height upon this plot the immediate setting of the church would be harmed and this hierarchy and importance of isolated setting would be altered irreparably from one of stand alone church and vicarage, to one where this setting is being encroached upon much more by other buildings. Although the proposed outbuilding would be set within the topography and excavated to lessen its impact, which would be to its benefit, I do not consider that this is enough to fully mitigate the harm here.

19. Similarly when seen from the churchyard itself, although there are now few, if any, views out from it to the south east, the proposed building would introduce a two storey built form where previously there has been none. Despite the presence of some boundary planting here, I consider that the proposed building would be visible and would introduce a rather stark, dominant and unarticulated addition into the backdrop of the churchyard that would also be harmful to the immediate setting and experience of the existing graveyard itself.
20. As such I consider that the proposal for the erection of the single and two storey detached ancillary outbuilding would cause harm to the setting and therefore the significance of the Grade II Listed Church of St John the Baptist that would be contrary to Policies DM1 and P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy that seeks to protect the significance of the historic environment and achieve good design.
21. In finding harm to the historic environment, I have considered the potential for public benefits that may be obtained through this scheme. Although I recognise the personal benefits of extending the property I do not consider that they are extensive enough to outweigh the harm to the Listed Building or the harm that I have identified. As such I can give these benefits only very limited weight.
22. In considering the proposed upward extensions to the extension to the main house, I echo the opinion of the parties and consider that this element of the proposal is acceptable as long as the important memorial stones are retained and materials match the quality of those used originally. As such the following conditions would be sufficient to allow this part of the appeal without causing harm to the church itself.

Conditions

23. I have considered the conditions proposed by the Council in the light of the requirements of the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. As well as the conditions suggested by the Council another condition is required that enables the important memorial and doner stones to be protected and preserved through the proposal. As such details of this have been included so as to ensure the protection of these important details.
24. The other conditions are similar to those suggested by the Council but as they do not relate to the proposed new ancillary building I do not consider that the amount of detail would be required as the original suggested conditions desired. As such these conditions have been slightly modified so as to be more reasonable with regards an extension and primarily focus on the quality of materials and fenestration that would be important for maintaining the design quality associated with the adjacent Listed Building.

Conclusion

25. Although I find no harm through the development of the first floor side extension to the existing building I consider that the harm caused by the single and two storey outbuilding to the immediate setting of the Grader II Listed Building of St John the Baptist would be sufficient enough for me to conclude that this part of the appeal should fail.
26. For the reasons given above therefore I conclude that the appeal should succeed in part only, and I will grant planning permission for the first floor side

extension subject to the conditions outlined in the schedule of conditions below. I will however uphold the refusal of planning permission for the single and two storey ancillary outbuilding to the garden.

A Graham

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- i) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- ii) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans insofar as they relate to the proposed first floor side extension; 21.2643.4A, 21.2643.5 and 21.2643.6.
- iii) Notwithstanding any description of materials in the application, no development shall be commenced until samples or full details of all materials to be used externally on the extension have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall include the type, colour and texture of the materials. Only the materials so approved shall be used.
- iv) Notwithstanding any description in the application no works shall take place to the extension until full product specifications for the windows, external doors and roof lights have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- v) Notwithstanding the approved plans details of how the extant memorial stones and doner panels that currently exist within the existing building will be retained in the proposed extension shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.