



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 August 2022

by Rachel Hall BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B3410/W/22/3297984

Bagot Lodge, Blithfield Hall Drive, Blithfield Hall, Admaston WS15 3NL

- 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 Kevin Massey against the decision of East Staffordshire Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2021/01474, dated 16 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of a contemporary styled car port canopy. The canopy is to be freestanding by 4 legs directly in front of the existing detached double garage. The legs are to be bolted down to the existing concrete hard standing parking area'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character or appearance of Admaston Conservation Area (the Conservation Area) and on the setting of grade II listed Bagot Lodge and Friary Lodge.

Reasons

3. The Conservation Area contains small clusters of houses, St Leonard's Church, Blithfield Hall and gardens, and surrounding woodland and parkland. Vehicular traffic through the Conservation Area is limited due to roads within it being for access only. Together with the expanse of parkland, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole is defined by the quality of its buildings and their rural, tranquil setting.
4. Bagot Lodge is one of a pair of buildings with Friary Lodge, located on opposite sides of the drive to Blithfield Hall. The symmetry between the original lodge buildings, together with their matching residential extensions, is readily appreciable when approaching from either direction on Blithfield Hall Drive (the Drive). Although Friary Lodge has additional modest extensions, these are largely tucked away from the most visible elevations. Consequently, the extent to which they are perceived from the Drive, and therefore the extent to which they detract from the overall sense of symmetry, is highly limited. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the significance of the two listed lodges is primarily derived from their architectural interest, including their visual symmetry.
5. The proposed car port has a simple design comprising vertical posts with a horizontal fascia. It would not have walls and would be set back some distance

from the Drive. This design would limit its bulk in views from the Drive and surrounding parkland. The height of the proposal would not be excessive, approximately matching the height of the existing garage doors. However, with a fascia spanning over five metres in width, six metres in length and 400mm deep it would nonetheless appear as a substantial and prominent structure. It would project some way forwards of the garage, cutting across the full width of one façade of the existing house.

6. The flat roof of the existing sunroom at Bagot Lodge and Friary Lodge is a discreet part of the development that joins the original gatehouse with the new residential extension. In contrast, although the uprights of the car port would not be dissimilar in scale to the downpipes of the existing rainwater guttering, the proposed fascia would appear as a solid frame, suburban in style. This would be at odds with the sensitively designed residential buildings and gothic appearance of the original lodge. It would also appear out of keeping with the tranquil, rural character of the adjacent parkland and the Conservation Area as a whole. By drawing attention to the parking area it would detract from appreciation of the buildings themselves.
7. In addition, due to the absence of intervening buildings or vegetation, the structure would be highly visible from the Drive outside the property. From that position, there are also open views of the opposite garage at Friary Lodge. Consequently, the appeal scheme would result in an appreciable loss of symmetry between the two lodges. Due to the existing conifers adjacent to the proposed scheme, views of the proposal from within Blithfield Hall parkland would only be possible at close range. However, in the event that those trees were to be severely pruned, become damaged or removed, the prominence of the proposal and the resulting lack of symmetry with Friary Lodge would be further emphasised.
8. The appellant has highlighted a number of examples of other extensions¹ in seeking to justify the appeal scheme. However, whilst not hidden from public view, the site context of those schemes and their relationship to surrounding buildings, including with respect to symmetry, does not appear comparable to that of the appeal scheme. No robust evidence is before me to indicate otherwise. Consequently these do not alter my reasoning here.
9. Other photographs are provided showing new gateways. However, without further details of the circumstances of those I cannot make any meaningful comparison. In any event, even if I were to find that one or more of those proposals resulted in harm to the character and appearance of the area, or other harm, the presence of such harm elsewhere would not justify allowing a scheme that I have found would also result in a degree of harm here.
10. The site's location within a conservation area does not prohibit development as a matter of course. However, paragraph 199 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Since the proposal is located within a conservation area and relates to the setting of a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 72(1) and 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

¹ The Granary Cottage (Ref P/2020/00918); Clover Grass (Ref P/2015/01369); Cherry Tree House (Ref P/2020/00206 and P/2017/00300)

11. The proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. In addition, it would result in a limited degree of harm to the setting of Bagot Lodge and Friary Lodge. The level of such harm would be less than substantial. In such circumstances this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. The proposal would provide shelter for the appellant's vehicles which represents a private benefit. Reference is made to possible future installation of solar panels on its roof which could lead to energy efficiency benefits. However that is not part of the proposal before me. In the absence of identified public benefits the harm to the significance of these heritage assets is not outweighed. There is no clear and convincing justification for the harm to the designated heritage assets as required by paragraph 200 of the Framework. That the proposal could be removed in future does not justify allowing the scheme.
13. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Policies SP1, SP24, SP25, DP1 and DP5 of the East Staffordshire Local Plan 2012-2031 (October 2015) (Local Plan) which all require consideration of the effects of proposals on the historic environment and their setting. It would also be contrary to Policy DP3 of the Local Plan which requires that extensions retain the identity of the original dwelling.
14. For the reasons given, it would also be contrary to the historic environment chapter of the Framework. It would similarly fail to accord with the East Staffordshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (February 2008) which amongst other matters, seeks to ensure that development proposals are appropriate to the overall building and its context, avoiding schemes that would appear out of place (page 69).

Conclusion

15. Therefore, having considered the development plan as a whole along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rachel Hall

INSPECTOR