



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 17 May 2022

by R Norman BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 October 2022

Appeal A Ref: APP/H0520/W/21/3284644

Reed Cottage, Holywell Front, Holywell PE27 4TG

- 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 Nigel Slack against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00111/HHFUL, dated 15 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 7 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of kitchen and removal of shed replaced with a linked 1.5 storey extension. Installation of an air source heat pump to introduce heating to the existing cottage and proposed extension.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/H0520/Y/21/3284643

Reed Cottage, Holywell Front, Holywell PE27 4TG

- 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 Nigel Slack against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00112/LBC, dated 15 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 7 July 2021.
 - The works proposed are replacement of kitchen and removal of shed replaced with a linked 1.5 storey extension. Installation of an air source heat pump to introduce heating to the existing cottage and proposed extension.
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Decisions

Appeal A Ref: APP/H0520/W/21/3284644

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B Ref: APP/H0520/Y/21/3284643

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

3. A reason for refusal (Appeal A, No. 3) relating to the impact on neighbouring residents from the noise from the air source heat pump was originally included. However, the Council have confirmed that as a result of the additional information submitted, this matter has been satisfactorily addressed and they no longer wish to pursue this reason for refusal. Furthermore, the Council have

confirmed that they are also satisfied with the position of the heat pump as a free-standing unit, set away from the wall of the outbuilding¹.

4. As the proposal concerns a Listed Building in a Conservation Area, I have had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:

Appeals A and B

- Whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II Listed Building, Reed Cottage, Holywell Front, or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses;
- Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Holywell Conservation Area; and

Appeal A only

- Whether it has been adequately demonstrated that the development would not increase the risk and vulnerabilities associated with flooding.

Reasons

The Special Interest and Significance of the Grade II Listed Building

6. The appeal site comprises an existing dwelling, Reed Cottage, with associated garden land. It is named in the National Heritage List for England as Reed Cottage, Holywell Front and List Entry Number 1330792. The property is located in proximity to the site frontage and the footpath. Reed cottage is a traditional 17th century thatched cottage, rendered in a light pink colour. It sits on the back edge of the footpath and is raised above the road level. As such, it appears prominent within its surroundings.
7. The significance of a heritage asset is the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting². The existing cottage derives its significance and special interest primarily from its historical character as a traditional vernacular cottage through its form, proportions and materials. Furthermore, the associated garden makes a positive contribution to its significance by providing a generous and verdant setting in which the building is experienced. It retains many of its traditional features, both internally and externally, and when coupled with its elevated and prominent position in relation to the public realm, it provides a significant historical contribution to the area.
8. Other properties in the surrounding area also display traditional and historic characteristics and therefore the appeal property also has value as part of the group, which also contributes to its significance.

¹ Paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 of the Council's Statement of Case dated 22 March 22

² National Planning Policy Framework (2021) - Glossary

The Appeal Proposal and effects

9. The proposal would introduce a 1.5 storey extension to the existing property. It would involve the removal of the existing lean-to kitchen and shed. The extension would be linked to the main dwelling by a glazed passage link and would provide a kitchen/diner, office, bedroom with en suite and a study. It would have a modern appearance and would include the use of glazing, timber cladding and brickwork. It would be sited to the side and rear of the existing property and extend into part of the rear garden.
10. The existing shed on the side of the existing property is in poor repair and is a more modern addition with little historic or architectural value. It is also visible from the road to the front of the appeal site. At present it does not contribute to the historic character or quality of the building and its removal would be beneficial. The proposed works would also involve the removal of a lean-to Victorian kitchen to the rear of the property. Internally, this provides a narrow kitchen area with a low, sloping roof and appears to have some issues with its degree of repair and structural integrity. It is rendered to match the existing property and has a low mono-pitched tiled roof. Although of Victorian construction, it makes a limited contribution to the special interest and significance of the building.
11. The proposal would involve the removal of a small part of the existing thatched roof, at eaves level. Whilst this would only be a small section, I consider that this would have the effect of unbalancing the traditional proportions of the cottage, and whilst not necessarily visible from the public realm, would nevertheless be harmful.
12. The main part of the extension would be visible from the front of the appeal site as a result of the land levels within and around the site and the existing boundary treatments. The footprint of the extension would be only slightly smaller than the existing cottage and, when taken with the glazed link and works to the rear of the property, would result in a substantial addition to the property. I accept that the ridge height of the extension would be lower, and the bulk of the extension set back into the site than the existing cottage, however I do not find the proposal to be subservient to the host cottage.
13. The glazed link to the rear of the property would allow views through to the existing rear elevation. However, this would still alter the visual character to the rear of the property and would make it more difficult to appreciate the historical features and context of the property. I accept that the modern design and materials have been put forward to purposefully contrast with the cottage however I still find the partial obscuring of the rear elevation to be harmful.
14. The proposed extension would have a harmful effect on the setting of the Listed Building also when viewed from both within the appeal site and from the public realm. It would introduce a structure that would be at odds with the prevailing form of the building and its surroundings as a result of its positioning and orientation and would erode the overall historic merit of the appeal site and the contribution the Listed Building's setting makes to its significance.
15. The Council have raised concern over the level of technical detail provided in relation to the zinc roof and the junction between the timber framed wall and the thatch of the cottage. Based on the plans and documents before me, the information is minimal. It does not adequately show the junction of the link's

roof with the Listed Building. This does not allow for a proper assessment of the effects of the proposal and I am not satisfied that this level of detail could reasonably be secured by condition.

16. Overall, for the above reasons, the proposal would fail to preserve the Listed Building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This would be contrary to the requirements of the Act. I find that harm to be less than substantial due to the nature and the extent of the proposal overall but, nevertheless, of considerable importance and weight. Policies LP11, LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (2019) (HLP) seek to ensure that development is well-designed, responds positively to its context and should draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings. Policy LP34 requires great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets and their settings and lists a number of criteria to be met. It also states that where there is less than substantial harm, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use³. I will return to any benefits later on in this decision. The proposal would also be contrary to part 3.8 of the Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017) which considers principles for building detailing and parts C1, C2, I1 and I2 of the National Design Guide (2019) which considers local and wider contexts, the value of heritage, local history and culture and requires development to respond to existing local character and identity and achieve well designed and high-quality places, amongst other things.

Holywell Conservation Area

17. The Holywell Conservation Area was designated in April 1980 and encompasses much of the built form of Holywell and extends out to incorporate the green, open space to the south of the settlement also. The appeal site is located within the eastern part. Within the Conservation Area there are a number of listed buildings, including the Grade I Church to the western side, a Grade II* adjacent to the appeal site and a number of Grade II, including the appeal property. In addition to the number of listed buildings contained within it, the defining characteristics of the Holywell Conservation Area are its historic pattern of development with the majority of the properties being sited parallel to and fronting the street, and its verdant landscape setting. Many of the properties are set within spacious plots with ample gardens which contribute to the rural character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
18. Reed Cottage occupies a prominent location within the Conservation Area and the street scene. The properties along this part of the road frontage are raised above the road level and are highly visible as a result of the large swathe of open land to the front of them. There are partial views into the spacious rear garden of the appeal site and the varying land levels ensure that the garden and its landscaping provide a positive contribution to the surroundings and gives a rural setting. Whilst there are variations in the architectural detailing and patterns of development in the immediate area, collectively the traditional buildings and character result in an attractive and historically significant street

³ Paragraph 202 National Planning Policy Framework 2021

scene. Reed Cottage contributes strongly to this setting through its traditional appearance, proportions, materials, form and orientation, and contributes to the group value of the surrounding properties.

19. The proposed extension would be partially visible from public areas within the Conservation Area. As a result of its positioning and land levels, although it would be set back from the existing cottage, it would have the potential to be visually dominant. The proposed modern design of the extension would contrast with the existing property, resulting in a clear distinction between the historic building and the new part. This would be suitable in contrast to a pastiche copy of the existing building.
20. As such I consider that the extension would be neutral and therefore would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of its modern appearance and overall design, however its scale and positioning, with its orientation at odds with the historic pattern of development parallel to the highway, would result in a degree of harm and would result in the loss of the rural setting which is characteristic of this part of the Conservation Area and the Conservation Area as a whole. I consider that this would not be adequately mitigated by the planting of a laurel hedge as, although this would provide some screening, much of the upper part of the building would still be visible and the sense of rural space between Reed Cottage and its neighbour would still be eroded.
21. I note the other examples of properties referred to by the Appellant within the Conservation Area. Holywell Conservation Area is characterised by varied patterns of development and an attractive mix of designs. The properties referred to sit within varied plot sizes and have differing siting and relationships with the Conservation Area and surrounding properties. As such, these are not wholly comparable to the proposal before me and do not, therefore, set a precedent.
22. The Act requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Given my findings above the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and would therefore fail to meet the statutory requirements of s72(1). It would therefore also conflict with Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of the HLP as well as the Framework in section 16. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. I will return to this below.

Flood Risk

23. The Council state that the appeal site is located within a high-risk Flood Zone and would represent a vulnerable form of development. However, the Appellant considers that the appeal site lies within Flood Zone 1, which is low risk. Although the submitted Environment Agency flood map shows the appeal site just within Flood Zone 1, adjacent to the high-risk area, the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment⁴ indicates that the appeal site is within a higher risk area. As such, I find that a flood risk assessment is required.

⁴ Huntingdonshire District Council Level 1 and 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment June 2017

24. I note the historic flood information that has been provided by the Appellant, however this does not indicate likely future flooding events.
25. Consequently, in the absence of a flood risk assessment, it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that the proposed dwelling would not result in an increased risk or vulnerability in relation to flooding. The development therefore fails to comply with Policy LP5 of the HLP, the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD and section 14 of the Framework. Collectively these seek to ensure that increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change is avoided, that all forms of flood risk have been addressed and all reasonable opportunities to reduce overall flood risk have been considered and where possible taken.

Other Matters

26. I note the Appellant's reference to the tabling of an alternative design⁵ however the Council have provided a copy of an email retracting this⁶. In any event, an alternative design would not be sufficient to address the conclusions in this case therefore I have not considered this further.
27. Local objections have been received concerning, in addition to the above matters, the presence of a well on site, drainage issues, access across common land, impacts during the construction period and impacts on neighbouring living conditions. However, it is not necessary for me to conclude on these matters as they would not affect my overall findings in this case.

Planning Balance

28. The Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm⁷. I have found that the proposal would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and the character and appearance of the Holywell Conservation Area, thus failing to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 197 of the Framework and development plan policies insofar as relevant. In doing so it would result in less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets of the Listed Building and the Conservation Area.
29. Under such circumstances, paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of the optimum viable use of the heritage asset. The proposal would provide improved living conditions for the occupiers of the property by achieving more space and a modernised living space, as well as the replacement of the Victorian kitchen. I find there would be a small public benefit as a result of the removal of the existing shed to the side of the property. In addition, there would be some economic benefits arising from the construction period. I have considered the potential for the building to become redundant should the works not be carried out, however I have been presented with no substantive or compelling evidence that the building's optimum viable use as a dwelling would be at risk if the development and works, as proposed,

⁵ Section 5 of Statement of Case dated 7 October 2021

⁶ Appendix 6 Email between Alex Stevenson and Olivia Manton.

⁷ Paragraph 199 National Planning Policy Framework 2021

were not implemented. In any event, the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence. Taking into account the public benefits of the proposal, these would not be sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm I have identified, which must carry considerable importance and weight.

30. In addition, I have found that it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that the development would not result in harm in relation to flood risk. Taken collectively in the planning balance, I find that the harms that I have identified outweigh the benefits and therefore the appeals should fail.

Conclusion

31. Accordingly, for the above reasons, and having regard to all matters raised including the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment⁸, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

R Norman

INSPECTOR

⁸ Appendix 1 HIA 4th January 2021