



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 September 2022

by M Ollerenshaw BSc(Hons) MTPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/D/22/3294748

The Beeches, Holly Vale, Marple Bridge, Stockport SK6 5DQ

- 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 David Hill against the decision of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref DC/083258, dated 3 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 7 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'construct a cantilever with a steel substructure to extend the existing garage plinth at floor level by two and a half metres into the property's curtilage. Move the existing sectional concrete double garage back into the curtilage thus revealing a parking space on the existing garage floor. Add steel steps to give access to the garage's rear door'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr David Hill against Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council which is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appeal site lies within the Green Belt. The Council has concluded that the proposal would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and I have no reason to disagree with this assessment based on my observations on site. I have not considered this matter further.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development proposed on the character and appearance of the area, including the Mill Brow Conservation Area and the setting of non-designated heritage assets.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises The Beeches, a two storey semi-detached stone-built dwelling in the Georgian style. It is attached to Hollyvale House and is situated on a narrow, cobbled lane to the south of Mill Brow. The property includes a single storey outrigger facing towards the lane and a sectional concrete double garage to the side. The appeal site is located within the Mill Brow Conservation Area (CA). The significance of the CA derives largely from the variety of historic buildings, including three storey weavers' cottages, mill workers' housing and farmhouses set within a steep sided valley. The close

relationship between the built form and the surrounding rural landscape is a defining characteristic.

6. Although The Beeches and Hollyvale House are not listed buildings, they are identified in the Mill Brow Conservation Area Character Appraisal as key unlisted buildings and they are also entered in the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record. The Beeches makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA by virtue of its traditional form and appearance. I agree with the Council that it should be treated as a non-designated heritage asset.
7. I have considered the effect of the scheme in the context of the obligations under the Act¹, which requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving the character or appearance of the CA. This is reflected in Framework paragraph 199 which requires that great weight be given to the asset's conservation when considering the impact of a proposed development on its significance.
8. The existing garage is situated directly adjacent to the road and is a flat roofed structure which is finished in pebble dash walls with a corrugated metal sheet roof and two up and over metal doors to the front. The site slopes down from the roadside such that the garage appears higher when viewed from the rear. Due to its utilitarian design and materials, the garage does not reflect the character and appearance of The Beeches or the CA more generally.
9. The proposal is to set the garage 2.5m further back into the site which would create a new parking space in front of it. The proposed garage would replicate the existing structure in terms of scale, design and materials. However, the proposed concrete cantilever, reinforced plinth, steel staircase and roller shutter doors would exacerbate its presence and appearance as an incongruous addition and fail to relate well to the traditional architectural form of the host property. The appeal submission suggests that the proposal would expose the existing concrete raft beneath the garage as a parking space, which would also not be sympathetic to the traditional surfacing materials generally found in the CA. The submission also indicates the provision of a fence adjacent to the new parking space, which would not reflect prevailing boundary treatments in the CA which typically comprise drystone walls.
10. As with the existing garage, the proposal would be highly prominent when viewed from the public right of way which runs along the front of the garage. However, setting the garage further towards the principal elevation of the host property means that it would also be more prominent when seen from Mill Brow to the north-west, particularly when the intervening trees are not in leaf. From these vantage points, the proposal would appear as an incongruous feature which would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Given the siting of the proposal further towards the front elevation of The Beeches, it would be harmful to the setting of this property, a non-designated heritage asset, and Hollyvale House to a lesser degree.
11. There are other garages with metal roller shutter doors in the CA but these do not reflect the character and appearance of the CA, which is characterised by more traditional materials. These other structures do not therefore provide compelling justification for the appeal proposal.

¹ Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

12. For these reasons, I consider that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, including the character and appearance of the CA, and it would also harm the setting of non-designated heritage assets. The proposal would conflict with Policies SIE-1 and SIE-3 of the Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD (2011) and saved Policies HC1.3 and CDH1.8 of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review (2006). Amongst other things, these policies require a high standard of design that complements the site and surrounding area and preserves or enhances heritage assets including conservation areas. The proposal would also conflict with the design and heritage aims of the Council's Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings Supplementary Planning Document (2011) and the Framework.
13. Framework paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal would 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 optimal viable use. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA.
14. The proposal would provide an additional parking space for a disabled resident which would also reduce the likelihood of the access road being blocked and enable improved access into the garage. Setting the garage further away from the road and creating space in front of it would make turning at the end of road easier for ambulances, delivery vehicles and visitors. However, there would be little benefit to turning and manoeuvring here if a vehicle is parked in the new parking space. Moreover, it has not been demonstrated that these benefits could not be achieved through alternative means, so avoiding the harm to the heritage assets. This matter therefore carries limited weight. The public benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the considerable weight and importance I attach to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the designated heritage asset.

Other Matters

15. I have carefully considered the circumstances of the appellant in determining the appeal and have had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which requires me to consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Protected characteristics include a person's disability or age. I have also had regard to the rights conveyed within the Human Rights Act. I do not doubt that the proposal would help to accommodate the appellant's needs. However, there is no convincing evidence before me to indicate that the appeal proposal is the only means of achieving the benefits which would result from the proposal. The dismissal of the appeal is a proportionate and necessary response having regard to the legitimate and well established planning objective of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
16. Interested parties raise concerns about the effects of the proposal on existing trees. Had I been minded to allow the appeal I would have found it necessary to investigate this matter in greater detail. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, there is no need for me to consider this further.

Conclusion

17. For the above reasons, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Ollerenshaw

INSPECTOR