



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 December 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/22/3303301

The Folly, Old Forge Lane, Preston Capes, Daventry NN11 3TD

- 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 C Moysen against the decision of West Northampton Council.
 - The application Ref: WND/2021/0689/FUL dated 6 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 June 2022.
 - The application is for raising of roof over garage to create habitable accommodation together with part garage conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the Preston Capes Conservation Area and a Building of Local Significance that lies within it.

Reasons

3. The appeal to which this application relates is primarily concerned with an existing flat roof, double garage building associated with, and ancillary to, 'The Folly'. The Folly is identified as a Building of Local Significance within the Preston Capes Conservation Area Management Plan (CAAMP) and this building, together with the neighbouring Arch Cottage form a pair of historic structures that echo a Medieval Castle through their use of crenelation and tower house forms. I have evidence before me that the pair of buildings, together with the intervening arch were created at the request of a former occupant of the nearby Fawsley Hall in the 18th century.
4. Old Forge Lane itself is an attractive village lane that serves several cottages and houses, many of which are tight knit and front onto, or site at right angles, to the lane. Due to the topography of the land here Old Forge Lane appears to run along something of an escarpment and the levels between properties on either side vary. The land then drops away towards the north although the Grade II* Listed Church of St Peter and St Paul remains upon a fairly prominent spur of land that protrudes slightly farther over the valley beyond.
5. The appeal property is located along a relatively narrow part of Old Forge Lane before it bends to the south before effectively leaving the core of the village.

The existing flat roof garage is set back from the edge of the lane and as such is not readily visible until one gets close to its location.

6. The proposal before me seeks to create a home office and ancillary living accommodation above the existing double garage. In so doing the proposal would erect a pitch above the existing flat roof structure which would allow a room to be located within the void of the roof. The pitch of the proposal would be built from the same level as the existing parapet/eaves of the existing garage. The proposed addition would be of a generally traditional roof form and would sport an oculus type window facing Old Forge Lane.
7. The proposal also includes the provision of a first floor balcony to the rear along with four rooflight windows and three new pairs of double glazed doors, giving access to the side, rear and balcony level respectively. The balcony would run almost the full width of the garage and allow views over the valley to the north. It would also include a 1.7m high glazed screen so as to protect neighbouring properties from any possible overlooking.
8. The Council have not identified any particular harm to nearby Listed Buildings, of which there are several within the Conservation Area and two¹ within reasonably close proximity of the site. However, in considering this scheme 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.
9. Section 72 of the same act also requires me to give special attention to the character or appearance of the Preston Capes Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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.
10. Firstly, I consider that the significance of the Preston Capes Conservation Area is largely determined through its tangible historic and rural architectural character that appears to date from at least the 18th century and probably from Medieval times. Although the church appears to be the oldest extant building, there are several other buildings that exhibit both the vernacular character of the area through their materials of thatch, tile or ironstone, many of which date to around the 17th or 18th century. These distinctive features, together with the village's overall form of modest scale lanes and buildings, contribute to much of the significance of the Conservation Area.
11. The Folly itself appears to have an historic relationship to the Fawsley Hall estate which sits some distance to the north of the village within the Special Landscape Area (SLA), and the building's form, scale and architectural detail seems to be directly related to the past inhabitants of the hall who presumably wished the site to be marked in some way upon the higher ground here. In this case The Folly and Arch Cottage exhibit many of the hallmarks of a peripheral estate building or architectural folly that would be typical of the romantic notions of such gentry in the 18th century.

¹ Falcon Cottage and Bank Cottage are both Grade II Listed Buildings and are located along Old Forge Lane, near to the appeal property.

12. In terms of visibility from the village towards the Special Landscape Area beyond, there are views and glimpses towards this landscape from several points along Old Forge Lane. I could not however see much past the existing garage building and wall when looking in this direction and as such I do not consider that views from in front of the garage are of particular significance. Of course, the view through the arch between The Folly and Arch Cottage is of high significance and, although there was a vehicle parked there on my site visit, one could clearly see the relationship between these two crenelated buildings and the landscape to the north.
13. In terms of the contribution of the existing garage building to the village, I accept that the building is relatively unobtrusive but I could not determine the building to contribute in a positive manner to the Conservation Area in any other means other than the materials used in its construction. It is admittedly a rather unassuming building, but it is still blatantly a building of the later 20th century and bears little aesthetic relationship to the majority of the character buildings within the Conservation Area itself.
14. In this respect I consider that the building should be considered to make either a neutral or slightly detracting contribution to the village. As such I find the potential for change as being generally acceptable. Moreover, I consider that the overall form of the proposed changes would result in a building that is not alien within its context and that the proposal would sit alongside other examples that appear to integrate relatively well along Old Forge Lane.
15. The Council have not advanced any harm to the Special Landscape Area although the Conservation Officer does suggest that the appeal site is prominent when seen from this area or from the nearby churchyard. I saw on my site visit however that, although the tower of The Folly itself is visible from here, the site of the existing garage is very well screened by trees and foliage, even in winter.
16. I also saw on my site visit that, from the churchyard at least, there were glimpses of pitched roof buildings in the background of The Folly. As such I consider that although The Folly and Arch Cottage are unique examples of their type, they do sit within a vernacular village setting that is primarily made up of pitched roofs of various types, sizes and styles. As such I do not consider that the introduction of another pitched roof would necessarily cause harm to either the Conservation Area, the setting or significance of nearby Listed Buildings or The Folly itself.
17. In light of this, I find the principle of altering the existing flat roof to one of a pitched roof would not cause harm to the historic environment. The omission of dormer windows and the presence of the oculus window to the front of the building, would therefore preserve, or slightly enhance, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area from its current situation.
18. In terms of the balcony to the rear of the building however, I have more fundamental concerns regarding the proposed design, subservience and domestication of this elevation with regards the historic environment. The proposed balcony in particular is of a relatively large scale and would contrast sharply with the more simplistic cottage aesthetic of the rest of the village. The raising of the roof of the building would also ensure that any such feature would be more prominent in views from the church. The proposed privacy

screen would also introduce a higher element of this design that would appear contrived and at odds with the character of the building and area.

19. Although I consider that some of these elements, such as the guard railing, could be conditioned in terms of their design, the overall principal and form of the balcony would be too great for a conditional approval to be effective. As such the harm caused by this feature could not be mitigated effectively. Similarly, it would not be possible to effectively split this decision to allow a pitched roof of the proposed building and to dismiss the balcony due to the interrelated nature of these proposals.
20. I therefore consider that although the proposed change from flat roof to pitched roof are acceptable in principle and meet the Policy requirements of the Local Plan and the CAAMP, the overall design and execution of the rear balcony feature would represent a poor design response that would overly domesticate this elevation of the building and appear at odds with its surrounding sensitive context. This would thereby cause harm to the setting and significance of The Folly as well as causing some harm to the character and appearance of the Preston Capes Conservation Area of which this site forms a part.
21. As such the requirements of Policies S10 and BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, Policies SP1, RA3, ENV7 and ENV10 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan for Daventry District 2020 have not been fully met and neither has the guidance contained within the Preston Capes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR