



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2023

by Elaine Moulton BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/M0655/D/22/3306832

3 Broad Lane, Grappenhall and Thelwall, Warrington WA4 3ER

- 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 and Mrs Andrew and Leanne Wright against the decision of Warrington Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2020/38319, dated 7 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is extensions to existing side outrigger including raising of ridge height, two-storey front extension and single-storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Grappenhall Village Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located on Broad Lane within the Grappenhall Village Conservation Area. As such I have had regard to the duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance.
4. The Conservation Area comprises many late 17th and 18th century buildings. Although the detailed designs of such buildings vary, there is a consistency in the use of facing materials with many buildings either being constructed in red brick with tiled roofs or rendered brick with slate roofs. The existing red brick and tile dwelling adds to the range of building design.
5. The appeal proposals relate to a former smithy building, attached to the dwelling, which retains the appearance of its former non-residential use and further contributes to the variety of buildings in the area. The existing dwelling and smithy building therefore make a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset.
6. The Council indicates that the appeal property should be considered as a non-designated heritage asset. The appellant disputes this stating that there is no apparent process for such a designation and no supporting evidence to show why it merits that status.

7. Based on what is before me I am aware that the building is identified as being locally listed in an appendix to the Local Plan Core Strategy (LP). I have been presented with no information confirming the criteria used to select this building as a non-designated heritage asset is publicly accessible. In this regard, therefore, the advice set out in national Planning Practice Guidance has not been followed. Nonetheless, the information set out in the comments of the Council's Conservation Officer and contained in the historic maps within the appellants' Design and Heritage Statement demonstrate that the building has a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration. Therefore, I have treated the appeal property as a non-designated heritage asset.
8. The proposed two-storey front extension to the smithy building would contain a tall arched opening at ground floor similar to that within the existing two-storey part of this building. However, the two large rooflights within this part of the building would stand above the roof plane and occupy a greater area than the existing.
9. The wide, single storey, section of the smithy contains no openings on its front elevation. The proposal would increase the roof height, add a front extension, and introduce a large arched double doorway and small window. Whilst there remains evidence of openings on this part of the building, none are of the scale and appearance proposed. The doorway would not, therefore, reflect any existing or former feature of the building and would be inconsistent with its original use. Furthermore, the proposed increase in the ridge height would result in its height being only marginally lower than the main dwelling and the two-storey part of the smithy.
10. At the rear it is proposed that the single storey section of the smithy building would become two storeys in appearance, and a rear facing gable feature and a significant amount of glazing would be introduced. Such alterations would completely transform the appearance of the building and any remaining original character of the smithy at the rear would be lost.
11. The proposed extensions and alterations to the single storey part of the smithy building would result in it no longer being subordinate in appearance to the two-storey part of the smithy, particularly when viewed from the rear. Furthermore, even though the smithy building would be set back from the main dwelling, the extent of the amendments proposed combined with its significant width would result in it visually competing with the dwelling.
12. The proposed extensions and alterations would result in a domestic appearance that would not respect the simple presence, and former use, of the smithy. Whilst the smithy has previously been altered and is now in residential use, it is still recognisable as a non-residential building and this character would be lost. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset.
13. The smithy is set back some distance from Broad Lane, and existing buildings, trees and boundary planting ensures that it is not prominent in public views. Nonetheless, the visibility from Broad Lane when approaching the site from Church Lane and in views from the end of the drive would increase because of its increased visual dominance. This, in addition to the proposed loss of character of the smithy, would harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

14. Accordingly, I conclude the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grappenhall Conservation Area which is a designated heritage asset. The National Planning Policy 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. However, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
15. The appellant has indicated that the building is not designed for residential occupation and that it is energy insufficient and suffers from the incursion of damp. Reference is also made to the removal of windows that are unsympathetic alterations to the building. However, such matters are not public benefits that weigh sufficiently in favour of the development to justify the harm that I have found to the Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset.
16. Accordingly, I conclude that proposal fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Grappenhall Village Conservation Area. It would therefore conflict with LP Policy QE6 which seeks to ensure a high quality place, and LP Policy QE8 that seeks to ensure that the fabric and setting of heritage assets are appropriately protected. Furthermore, it is not consistent with the historic environment protection aims of the Framework.

Conclusion

17. The development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole. There are no other considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweighs the identified harm and associated development plan conflict.
18. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Moulton

INSPECTOR