



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 February 2023

by E Worthington BA (Hons) MTP MUED MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N2535/D/22/3310526

Coach House, Holmes Lane, Dunholme, Lincoln, LN2 3QT

- 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 M Jeffs against the decision of West Lindsey District Council.
 - The application Ref 144554, dated 19 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 6 September 2022.
 - The development proposed a front extension to form an extended kitchen and sitting room, additional bedroom and ensuite.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the proposal relates to the settings of listed buildings, I have had special regard to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and; whether the proposal would preserve the settings of the nearby Grade I listed building Church of St Chad, Holme Lane (Ref: 1064139) and the nearby Grade II listed building The Vicarage, Holme Lane (Ref: 1359446).

Reasons

The coach house and the settings of the listed buildings

4. The appeal property is a two storey detached dwelling that was previously the coach house to the neighbouring former vicarage which is associated with the Church of St Chad to the east. It is set back from Holmes Lane with a double garage to the front and a tall boundary wall and gates.
 5. The parish church dates to the early 13th century and is built in coursed limestone rubble with a slate roof and stone coped gables. It is dominated by a lofty tower in three stages with string courses and a battlemented parapet with corner pinnacles. This attractive traditional building of some considerable rural charm sits in an elevated position in a generous walled and leafy churchyard in the centre of the settlement. It is a distinctive feature of the rural village and a building of the highest national significance.
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6. In so far as relating to this appeal, the significance of the church is derived from its architectural and historic interest as an important long standing place of worship, along with its role and status in the settlement and relationship with the rest of the village, notably the vicarage and its coach house to the west which relate closely to it.
7. The former vicarage is built of squared limestone rubble with ashlar quoins and dressings and hipped and gabled slate roofs. It dates to 1864 and has been considerably altered and extended, notably to its frontage facing Holmes Lane where it has seen the removal of a two storey element, boundary wall and gateway to provide a garage and driveway. Nevertheless, it remains an interesting and attractive example of a higher order Victorian dwelling and has retained its fanciful Tudoresque features and decorative style as well as its sense of historic connection with the church.
8. In so far as relating to this appeal, the significance of the vicarage stems mainly from its architectural and historic interest as a traditional Victorian residence. It also originates from its clear association with the church and its relationship to this and the rest of the rural village including the coach house.
9. Despite their different ages and architectural styles, and accepting that they have their own particular features of interest and significance, there is nevertheless a cohesiveness to this small pocket of village buildings in the centre of the settlement. They are within Character Area H of the Dunholme Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan which contains some of the settlement's most handsome and historically significant buildings and is recognised as an attractive and memorable historic village core.
10. The settings of these two listed buildings, and the contribution they make to the significance of those assets, in so far as relating to this appeal, is derived mainly from the rich historic character of the village townscape and its traditional buildings as well as their relationship to each other. These collectively provide evidence of the role and status of the settlement and its historic development and contribute positively to the understanding and the special interest and significance of the church and the vicarage along with the ability to appreciate them.
11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) defines setting as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Although not listed itself, as the former coach house to the vicarage the appeal building has a historic functional association with the two listed buildings and forms part of this small distinct group of buildings in the core of the village.
12. The appeal building has seen a considerable number of alterations and extensions to the side, rear and the front, as well as the construction of a detached double garage forward of its building line. Despite these, it remains smaller in scale to the vicarage and has a less ornate more simple design which affirm its subservient position in the hierarchy of the three buildings.
13. The coach house adjoins the western boundary of the vicarage, and despite its set back position and boundary enclosures, there is some inter-visibility to varying extents between the appeal property and the vicarage and the church beyond. Additionally, some contextual views of the vicarage and the church taken on the Holmes Lane frontage include the appeal property. Furthermore,

some views of the two listed buildings looking back across the churchyard from Holmes Lane on its eastern side include the appeal building as a backdrop.

14. As such, as well as a historic functional association, the appeal building has a close and direct visual relationship with the vicarage and the church and therefore contributes to the settings of both those listed buildings. I have had special regard to this matter in considering the appeal.

The effect of the proposal

15. The proposal would see the addition of a two storey front extension and single storey front extension and would provide an extended kitchen and sitting room with an ensuite and two bedrooms on the first floor.
16. The two storey front extension would remain behind the neighbouring property at the vicarage and would not extend forwards of the existing single storey front utility room element of the host building (which would remain as a forward projection). Even so, it would extend across the entire main part of the frontage of the house at two storey level. Its pitched hipped roof would be slightly lower than that of the main roof, and would not intrude on the skyline. However, it would have the same eaves height as the main roof and in practical terms would introduce an additional long narrow section of two storey development in front of the main dwelling, and create a further pitched roof and roof ridge there.
17. The single storey element of the proposal would project at an angle from the front of the house and run along the slanting boundary wall to adjoin the detached garage. It would have a pitched roof with sky lights to its western side adjacent to the adjoining lane which runs down the property's western boundary. It would result in the currently detached garage being attached to the front of the house.
18. I appreciate that a Heritage Statement has been produced, and that time and effort has been taken to establish an acceptable layout for the extension to meet the needs of the occupiers. I also note the appellant's view that an evolutionary design approach has been adopted to reflect what is already a significantly altered building.
19. Nevertheless, the proposed extensions would be considerable in size, prominent in siting and somewhat contrived in design. Despite the use of traditional matching materials they would appear as unduly large and dominant features on the host dwelling. They would overwhelm its appearance and introduce incongruous and uncharacteristic additions to the essentially traditional dwelling. The proposal would also create an awkward and discordant footprint. In extending forward of the main elevation and stretching development up to the garage, effectively joining it to the house, the proposal would almost completely fill in the front courtyard area. This would result in a cramped and unsatisfactory overdevelopment of the already somewhat constrained site frontage which narrows towards Holmes Lane.
20. I accept that the appeal property is set well back from Holmes Lane and is not highly visible in the street scene. It is screened to some degree by the detached garage and is enclosed by a tall boundary wall adjoining the lane to the west and is gated to Holmes Lane. Even so, given its scale the incongruent and over-dominant proposal would be appreciated from Holmes Lane above the

garage and the gates. It would also be seen from the adjacent lane to the west, and from the vicarage and the churchyard to the east. Additionally I saw at my visit that it would be visible in some views looking westwards from Holmes Lane across the churchyard, albeit at some distance.

21. In increasing the bulk and massing of the coach house and introducing obtrusive additions, the proposal would also increase the dominance of the coach house and elevate its status in relation to the vicarage. This would be so even in light of the alterations and enlargements that have taken place at the vicarage, and would further undermine any sense of the coach house's former status as an ancillary building. In undermining the primacy of the vicarage, the proposal would also upset the well-established and characteristic hierarchy between the church, the vicarage and the appeal building.
22. As set out above, these traditional buildings and their relationship to each other and the surrounding area contribute much to the historic townscape of the village. Thus the proposal would detract from the pleasant appearance of the picturesque historic core of Dunholme.
23. The Council also raises concerns about the loss of the existing bricked up arched doorway feature on the appeal building's front elevation. Whilst the original historic opening to the coach house was square, the arch feature was constructed when the property was previously extended as a nod to the building's former role. Even given the already significantly altered appearance of the appeal property, I am mindful that this feature was purposefully provided to represent the traditional characteristic opening of a coach house.
24. Whilst it is obscured from view from the street, as a remaining vestige of the building's previous role I have some sympathy with the Council's view that the loss of this feature would diminish the ability to understand the building's historic function and undermine its traditional appearance. In doing so it would also serve to further weaken the building's historic association with the vicarage. This matter adds to my concerns regarding the scheme.
25. Bringing matters together, in causing harm to the character and appearance of the host property, and unacceptably undermining the historic character of the village townscape and affecting the relationship between its important traditional buildings (which are elements that contribute positively to the special interest and significance of the listed buildings), the proposal would detract from the settings of the listed buildings, and the ability to appreciate them. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the settings of the nearby listed buildings.

The heritage balance

26. I therefore conclude on the main issues that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host building, and would fail to preserve the settings of the nearby listed buildings. I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the balance of this appeal.
27. The Framework advises at paragraph 199 that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 200 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets or from development within their setting and that this should have

- a clear and convincing justification. I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
28. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires that less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
29. The appellant argues that the proposal would see investment in the property that would enhance its durability and secure a sustainable future for the coach house as a sound desirable dwelling in the village. It is suggested that this in turn would allow it to positively contribute to the settings of the nearby listed buildings and thereby help to secure their future and contribute to sustainable village life. However, since the appeal property has an established residential use which would not cease in the absence of the proposed extensions, I am not persuaded that any such public benefits are necessarily dependant on the appeal scheme. Whilst reference is also made to the improved living standards and well-being of the occupiers of the building, I am conscious that these are private benefits only.
30. Bringing matters together, I find that overall, the public benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets I have identified.
31. The proposal would be contrary to Policy LP17 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (LP) which seeks to protect and enhance the intrinsic value of the landscape and townscape and requires proposals to respond positively to historic buildings. It would conflict with LP Policy LP25 which seeks to protect, conserve and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment and protect the significance of designated heritage assets (including their setting), and with LP Policy LP26 which requires proposals to take into consideration the character and local distinctiveness of the area and create a sense of place.
32. It would also be at odds with Policy 4 of the Dunholme Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (NP) which requires proposals to preserve or enhance the village of Dunholme by (amongst other things) recognising and reinforcing the distinct local character in relation to height, scale, spacing, layout, orientation, design and materials of buildings (1), and respecting and protecting designated and non-designated local heritage assets and their settings (2). Furthermore, it would fail to support NP Policy 12 which seeks to resist development that would lead to an inappropriate alteration or extension to a listed building or undermine the wider setting of a listed building.
33. For these reasons the proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 197 of the Framework and would be in conflict with the development plan.

Other Matters

34. The appellant refers to the findings of a previous Planning Inspector dealing with an appeal¹ in 1995 against an enforcement notice relating to the erection of the existing double garage at the appeal property in an alternative position to that permitted. This found that the single storey detached garage did not obscure views of the vicarage or have an adverse effect on its setting. I have had regard to that Inspector's conclusions in relation to the nearby heritage

¹ APP/C/94/N2535/634892

assets, but since it concerns a different proposal and was determined under different circumstances, it does not alter my findings in relation to the appeal scheme.

35. I appreciate that the appellant has a strong local connection over five generations including in the building industry. I am aware they feel that they have developed the appeal building sensitively over the last 30 years, have respected the historic character of the area, and are committed to its improvement. I also acknowledge that there is support for the proposal from neighbouring occupiers including those at the vicarage. However, these matters do not affect my conclusions in relation to the main issues in this case and are not reasons to allow development that I have found to be harmful.
36. The appellant raises concerns about the handling of the planning application and does not consider the Council to have acted positively and proactively. Reference is made to a lack of negotiation, misleading information on the website and a shift in the Council's position. The appellant also questions the research done by the Conservation Officer as well as the advice provided and refers to the influence of internal politics within the planning department. However, those are all matters between the appellant and the Council. I confirm that I have considered the appeal scheme on its individual planning merits and made my own assessment as to its impact.
37. I am aware that planning permission has been granted for a single storey store room extension to the rear of the garage that has not been implemented. Whilst I have not seen any further details relating to this, the appellant indicates that the appeal proposal seeks to cover an additional ground floor area of 33 square metres. As such, the proposal before me is larger than this permitted scheme and includes a two storey element. Accordingly, this fallback position would not have the same effect as the appeal scheme and lends no weight in favour of it.

Conclusion

38. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all the other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

E Worthington

INSPECTOR