



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 April 2023

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/M2840/D/23/3315090

East Wing, Clopton Hall, Clopton, KETTERING, NN14 3DZ

- 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 D Brown against the decision of North Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref NE/21/01765/FUL, dated 20 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 28 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is the construction of an Orangery extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of Clopton Hall and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. Clopton Hall is a large, three-storey country house dating from the early 20th Century and built in a Baroque style. It is stone-built with an ornate central front door that has a feature shallow bay above. The front façade is symmetrical in form and design either side of the front door, with two, full-height front gables. The Hall is characterised by a number of large windows set in stone mullions. There is a single-storey side extension at the north-western end of the house which apparently originally contained servants' quarters. This is also stone-built and includes a front gable feature and large windows to mirror key features of the main façade of the house.
4. The house itself now comprises three separate dwellings, and the appeal property is made up of the 'east wing' of the house. Because the front door of the appeal dwelling is sited in the south-eastern elevation, the proposed extension has the nature of a side extension in the context of the whole Hall, but a front extension in the context of the 'east wing'.
5. The proposed extension would be a single-storey, flat-roofed structure with rendered walls. It would have stone quoins to match the existing house and large patio doors within the south-east and south-west elevations. It would include a lantern roof with ornamental ironwork above, and would have a mono-pitch glazed roof element against the existing side/front elevation and above a connecting hallway that would form a new entrance to the dwelling.

6. Policy 2 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (CS) indicates that proposals should conserve and, where possible, enhance the heritage significance and setting of a heritage asset in a manner commensurate to its significance, and that they should complement their surrounding historic environment through the form, scale, design and materials. The justification for Policy 8 of the CS stresses the importance of good design at proposal level to ensure that proposals create sustainable, characterful places. The Policy indicates that development should create a distinctive local character by responding to the site's immediate and wider context and local character.
7. Policy EN15 of the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2: Submission Plan 2011-2031 (LP) indicates that development affecting a non-designated heritage asset, where it is designed sympathetically having regard to the significance of the asset, its features, character and setting, will be supported. Development should seek to enhance the character of the non-designated heritage asset whether or not it is included in a local list. Since the LP has reached an advanced stage of preparation, I afford it significant weight.
8. The Council's Householder Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) indicates that front extensions should normally only be single storey and should be in proportion to the original house so they do not extend too far forwards or be too dominant at the front of the property. Roof design should complement the dwelling and be of a sympathetic style. A side extension is usually set back from the front of a house. The only circumstances where side extensions in the same plane as the existing façade are visually acceptable is where the applicant can demonstrate that the proposed extension enhances rather than detracts from the existing design.
9. The Council contends that the proposed Orangery extension by virtue of its scale, form and design would result in an incongruous form of development that is significantly detrimental to the character and appearance of the area, and causes considerable harm to the identified non-designated heritage asset (Clopton Hall) diminishing its historical value.
10. The appellant contends that the extension is an appropriate design for the setting. It is good quality in terms of materials and appearance; it has no adverse impact on residential amenity of neighbouring homes; and it is well screened by existing hedging such that any impact is particularly well contained within the side garden to the appeal property. In addition, the appellant considers that the proposal is not an inappropriate or incongruous form of development for this site, since the hall dates from the early 20 century and the design of the orangery is consistent with, and appropriate for, this period.
11. The grounds of Clopton Manor, which include Clopton Hall and other buildings, are not within a conservation area. Moreover, the proposed extension would not have any impact on the setting of the Grade 2 listed 'King John House' and 'The Gatehouse' which, though within the same complex of buildings, are at a distance from the appeal site and separated by significant landscape features. The Council considers Clopton Hall to be a non-designated heritage asset for its architectural and historic interest. It is not on a list of local heritage assets and the Council has not provided any detailed explanation as to why it should be considered one. Nevertheless, it would appear that it meets the criteria for deciding whether a building could be considered to be such an asset as contained in Table 10 of the LP, and referred to in Policy EN15.

12. The extension is described as an Orangery. Its function, however, would appear to be as a kitchen/dining extension to the dwelling, incorporating a new main entrance and hallway. The overall extension, including the porch and hallway, would project out from the main front elevation of the Hall by around 9 metres, and it would have a depth of some 6.4 metres. It would have a flat roof with a large lantern window that would have decorative ironwork above. The extension would obscure the existing front door with its decorative stonework and semi-circular window above, and would have a glazed mono-pitch roof over the new hallway against the front elevation of the dwelling. Finally, the extension would necessitate the removal of a high mature hedge that projects out from the south-eastern corner of the dwelling and which currently screens the private area immediately to the south of the dwelling.
13. In terms of scale, the extension would be smaller than the service wing at the other end of the Hall, and it would not appear dominant or out of scale with the rest of the Hall. However, it would represent a dominant front extension in the context of the east wing itself. Moreover, I have significant concerns about the design and materials of the extension, and its impact on the appearance of the Hall as a coherent entity. The removal of the hedge would make the extension highly visible from the front of the Hall. The extension would effectively have no set back from the main front elevation of the Hall, and the view of the extension from in front of the Hall would be of a blank rendered wall. This would appear out of character with the rest of the front façade which is stone-built and which is punctuated by a large number of stone-mullioned windows.
14. Whilst there may be no definitive design for an Orangery attached to a Baroque-style country house, the extension as proposed for the east wing would appear out of character and context. It would not reflect the more sympathetic design of the service quarters at the opposite end of the building; it would not continue the line of windows along the front facade; the lantern light with ironwork has little or no contextual basis; the original ornate front door and surrounds would be lost from view; the mono-pitch roof above the hallway would appear somewhat clumsy wrapping around the external chimney breast; and the materials used, with particular reference to the amount of render and the type and design of patio doors, would appear neither innovative nor respectful to the original building.
15. In conclusion, whilst a modern design of extension would not necessarily, in itself, be unacceptable on this early 20th Century Baroque-style Hall, the design, siting and materials in this case, would be harmful to the otherwise generally coherent design and appearance of the Hall and its associated service quarters, irrespective of status as a non-designated heritage asset. Although described as an Orangery, it is effectively a kitchen/dining extension with new porch and hallway, and would appear as an incongruous form of development in its context. It would detract from the character and appearance of Clopton Hall and its immediate surroundings, and would be harmful to the historic and architectural value of the non-designated heritage asset. On this basis, it would conflict with Policies 2 and 8 of the CS, Policy EN15 of the LP and with guidance on front and side extensions to houses in the SPD.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR