



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 July 2023

by L Wilson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/D/23/3317447

Werneth Hall, Cowlshaw Road, Romiley, Stockport SK6 4NU

- 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 Professor Karen Kirkby against the decision of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref DC/086755, dated 7 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 7 December 2022.
 - The development proposed was originally described as erection of front and rear dormer extensions at first floor level. Erection of porch to front entrance and a single-storey garden office to the rear. PV to proposed garden office, proposed dormers and existing garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. Based on the information presented, the scheme would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt as it would comply with Policies GBA1.2 and GBA1.5 of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review (2006) (UDP), and chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). This position is agreed by the main parties.
3. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area, bearing in mind the special attention that should be paid to the desirability of preserving the setting of the nearby Grade II listed building.

Reasons

4. Pictures show that Werneth Hall was previously a two-storey building with a white lime wash/ render to the stonework and had an outrigger. The footprint and roofscape of the building have changed over the years, and around 2005 extensive refurbishment was carried out to the building which resulted in an additional storey being added.
5. Werneth Hall is now a three-storey dwelling with a single-storey side extension. The dwelling is constructed of stone with a slate roof. It has a large driveway leading to a detached double garage, and a terraced garden to the rear. The existing extension includes a corner window which is typically a more modern detail.
6. Werneth Hall is not listed but is included in the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record. It has been drawn to my attention that there are

inaccuracies in the entry, and Werneth Hall is not identified within Stockport's Historic Environment Database. Having said that, the Council has identified Werneth Hall as a non-designated heritage asset, and this is not disputed within the appellant's Heritage Statement. The building has a degree of architectural and historical significance. Architecturally, the building displays typical characteristic features of a large, period farm house from this area, with its plain and functional form and traditional use of local stone and slate.

7. Werneth Hall forms part of a small group of dwellings, believed to be a former farmstead, which comprises terraced cottages and a detached dwelling. Although these buildings (including Werneth Hall) have been altered over the years, they maintain a strong collective uniformity which have a traditional character and appearance. The wider surrounding area is characterised by agricultural land use.
8. Adjacent to the appeal site is Werneth Old Hall Barn which is a Grade II listed building, known as Werneth Hall Farm. The evidence before me highlights that it was built around the early 1800s, is constructed of coursed rubble with a stone slate roof. The building was previously a barn which was renovated and refurbished to form a dwelling. The original significance of the building has been altered through its conversion and physical changes, but it maintains heritage value. As the proposal relates to the setting of a listed building, I have had special regard to section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
9. Werneth Hall Farm is situated to the side of the appeal site and has a separate entrance. Its side elevation faces towards Werneth Hall. The double garage of Werneth Hall sits between the two dwellings. There is a low wall and railings along the boundary. As a result, there are clear views between Werneth Hall Farm and Werneth Hall. There is a strong relationship between the buildings due to their physical proximity, siting within the same view, material similarities and associated former uses. For these reasons, Werneth Hall makes a positive contribution to the setting and significance of the listed building.
10. The ridgeline, footprint and materials (including silvered timber and grey roof) of the extension have been designed to be lightweight and respect the existing building as well as nearby buildings. I have taken into account SPAB and Historic England guidance, and recognise that contemporary materials and design can successfully complement historic buildings.
11. There is a barn immediately opposite Werneth Hall, which I understand has a lapsed planning permission for the conversion to a 4-bedroom home¹. I do not have full details of that permission but there are some similarities in the design to the scheme before me. Nonetheless, that proposal maintained an uncluttered roof with no dormers, and in any case I have considered the appeal proposal on its own merits.
12. The appellant sets out that there are numerous examples of properties with dormer extensions and gables with large areas of glazing in the local area. However, I did not observe such features in the locality. The former farmstead buildings also do not contain such features.

¹ DC/046188

13. The proposed development would result in substantial dormers to the existing extension. It would include large sliding doors, a glass-balustraded Juliet balcony to the front and a glass-balustraded external balcony to the rear. Dormer windows are not characteristic of the host dwelling, or nearby buildings. The roof of Werneth Hall and adjacent dwellings are characterised by simple, uncluttered roof forms which contribute to their historic and architectural character.
14. I observed on my site visit that only very limited views of the development would be visible from public vantage points because of the siting of nearby buildings and vegetation. Nonetheless, glimpsed views would be possible from parts of Cowlshaw Road and longer distance views across the valley.
15. The dormers would not respect the former farmstead buildings distinctive character and roofscape because they would be visually discordant and incongruous features as a result of their scale, massing and design. The substantial dormers with large openings and contemporary design would not be sympathetic or respectful to the historic form of the host building or adjacent buildings. The development would result in an intrusive feature that would draw the eye and detract from the ability to appreciate the listed building. Consequently, the proposed development would adversely affect the visual amenity of the area. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
16. I have considered the Council's argument that the grant of planning permission would set a precedent for other similar developments. Each application and appeal must be determined on its individual merits. A generalised concern of this nature would not justify withholding permission or result in additional harm.
17. In relation to the listed building, paragraph 199 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development 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 any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. This is also reflected in Policy SIE-3 of the Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Local Development Framework: Core Strategy DPD (2011) (CS).
18. The level of harm would be at the low end of the spectrum of less than substantial harm. This is due to the scale of the development, Werneth Hall and the other former farmstead buildings have been altered over the years, relationship between the host building and listed building, and very limited public views of Werneth Hall. Nonetheless, mindful of my statutory duties, this is a matter to which I attach considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
19. In relation to Werneth Hall, paragraph 203 of the Framework states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a

balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

20. The appellant sets out environmental, economic and social benefits, specifically that they aim to minimise the Lifetime Carbon of the property and provide energy security. I fully acknowledge and understand the intentions of the appellant to reduce the energy demand of the house, address fossil fuel dependency, contribute towards local retrofit targets and decarbonisation goals. However, given the small scale of the development, the benefits would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.
21. Given the above and in the absence of any defined significant public benefit, I conclude that, on balance, the proposed development would not preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building and would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the heritage asset. Furthermore, the scheme would cause harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset and character and appearance of the surrounding area.
22. Consequently, the proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraphs 202 and 203 of the Framework and conflict with Policy SIE-3 of the CS that seek, among other things, to protect the historic environment. Whilst not listed within the reason for refusal but identified as a conflict in the officer's report and the appellant has referred to them, the development would also conflict with Policy SIE-1 of the CS and Policy CDH1.8 of the UDP. These seek, amongst other things, to ensure developments consider the site's characteristics and context to ensure that extensions complement the existing dwelling and do not adversely affect the character of the street scene. As a result, the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan.
23. Even if I had found that Werneth Hall is not a non-designated heritage asset, that would not outweigh the harm I have found in relation to the listed building, the former farmstead buildings, and visual amenity of the area.

Other Matters

24. I acknowledge the other matters highlighted by the appellant, including that they wish to enhance the building's visual and physical connection to the surrounding landscape and garden, as well as improvements in accessibility to ensure their home is suitable in older age. In addition, frustrations with the Council, no objections from neighbours, compromises, and pre-application advice. Nonetheless, the other matters raised do not outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

25. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other material considerations, the appeal does not succeed.

L Wilson

INSPECTOR