The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 September 2023

by D Cleary MTCP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2003/D/23/3326607

Ronora, Front Street, Alkborough, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire DN15 9JW

- 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 Anthony King against the decision of North Lincolnshire Council.
- The application Ref: PA/2023/159, dated 26 January 2023, was refused by notice dated 04 July 2023.
- The development proposed is the replacement of windows to front elevation; replacement of front door; installation of roof light to rear roof slope; and, the installation of wrought iron gates to front boundary.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development in Council's decision notice differs from that on the application form. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed. The Council's description of development includes reference to an extension, albeit no extension is proposed. On the contrary the description on the application form is unnecessarily lengthy. I have therefore altered the description of development from the application form with more concise wording.

3. During the course of the application proposed railings on the front wall were removed from the scheme. I have therefore considered the appeal based on the amended proposals.

4. The application was not supported by accurate, to scale, elevations to show the effect of the proposed development which, instead, relies on not to scale drawings, photographs and written descriptions. Having regard to national validation requirements[1] I am satisfied that sufficient information has been provided for validation purposes. However, I make references to the lack of detail in my reasoning below.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:

[1] Set out in Article 7(1)(c)(ii) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) (Order) 2015

a) whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Alkborough Conservation Area (the ACA); and,

b) the effect of the development on the setting of the Methodist Chapel a grade II listed building.

Reasons

Alkborough Conservation Area

6. Alkborough is a small rural village. The ACA covers the majority of the village which is concentrated around The Church of St John the Baptist and historic figure of eight plan form of Front Street, Back Street and Cross Street. The remainder of the ACA includes Walcot Manor and its surrounding landscape. Insofar as is relevant to this case, I consider that the significance of the ACA derives from its historic pattern and form of development, and the architectural detailing of its buildings.

7. The appeal dwelling is a two-storey semi-detached cottage, of simple traditional appearance, with a red brick front elevation and stonework to other elevations. The dwelling and its semi-detached pairing are set back slightly from Front Street behind a low brick wall. Development in the immediate area comprises a close-knit pattern of development with buildings sited at the back of the pavement or behind low front boundary walls. The Alkborough Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the pair of cottages as being Buildings of Townscape Merit and I agree that they contribute positively to the overall character and appearance of the ACA.

8. The scheme proposes alterations to the existing windows and door in the front elevation, a roof light to the rear, and installation of wrought iron gates to the front boundary.

9. There is conflicting information with regard to the installation and widening of the front ground floor window. Initial information[2] indicated that the proposed window would be 6ft wide, while the submitted window details for this opening[3] suggests that the window would be 2370mm wide. I do not have details of the width of the neighbouring window and, given the lack of detail, I am unclear as to whether the window would match the width of the neighbouring property.

10. Furthermore, the adjacent window is separated vertically by three mullions with well-proportioned glazing panes. The proposed window would have 2 mullions with squat upper panes of glass. The thickness of the framework appears much greater than the narrow framework of the existing window, which is likely to exacerbate the use of UPVC. Based on the information provided, I find that the design of this window is likely to be visually discordant with the host property and that of its neighbour.

11. Similarly, I do not have dimensions of the existing first floor opening. I cannot be certain that the proposed dimensions of the replacement[3] would match the existing. In addition, the existing opening includes narrow timber framework and mullions, while its replacement appears to be markedly chunkier. Therefore, in the absence of accurate detail, I cannot be satisfied that the

[2] Email from Appellant dated 17 January 2023
[3] Roundbrand Ltd Quotation dated 05 April 2023

replacement windows would preserve the character and appearance of the ACA.

12. The proposed door includes two vertical panels of glazing with a further semi-circle glazed panel above. The appearance of the door would not be traditional to the host building, and departs from the traditional style of doors within the wider ACA, which are largely fabricated in timber with limited glazing.

13. I note that there are some examples of UPVC openings within the ACA including in the adjacent property. I do not have full details of the circumstances of when any of these openings were installed and, indeed, their lawfulness. Nonetheless, the prevailing character is timber openings and openings which have a traditional appearance.

14. The Council have raised no concern with regard to the installation of a velux window within the rear roof slope. Such development may be acceptable if appropriately designed. However, I do not have any detail with regard to its position, size or appearance and, as such, I cannot be fully satisfied that a roof light would not have a negative effect on the ACA.

15. With regard to the proposed vehicular and pedestrian gates, the submitted information appears to show that the proposed gates would be sited at the back of the pavement, with a cumulative width of over 4m, and would align with the adjacent dwarf walls. I do not have any elevational detail to show how the heights of the wall and gates would relate. Notwithstanding this, it is evident that the gates would be taller than the modest walls, resulting in a visually more prominent boundary.

16. The proposed ornamental design of the gates would be at odds with the simple unassuming design and appearance of the host dwelling and the modest scale of the existing wall. There are no gates of similar design or scale within the immediate frontage and the incongruity of the gates would be exacerbated by their overall width and siting immediately adjacent to the pavement. Furthermore, the gates would lead to a visual imbalance between the host dwelling and its semi-detached pairing. The proposals would therefore result in a prominent and uncharacteristic form of development in the streetscene.

17. I have had regard to the gates cited by the appellant at Walcot Hall and Manor Farm. These have a distinctly rural setting and relate to grander properties compared to the appeal site and as such I do not find them to be unduly out of context. I have also considered other metal gates which are located within the ACA. These are generally well related to their adjacent boundary walls and existing buildings. They are more discretely sited and sympathetically incorporated into the streetscene. Therefore, I do not find other gates in the ACA to be directly comparable and, in any event, I have considered the appeal proposals on its merits.

18. I note that the Parish Council raised no concern with regard to the windows and gates. While the Parish Council may have no concern with regard to these elements, I am required to ensure that the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the ACA and such support does not outweigh the concerns that I have identified.

19. Therefore, the proposals are contrary to policy HE2 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan 2003 (the NLLP), and policies CS5 and CS6 of the North Lincolnshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2011 (the CS). Together, these require, amongst other things, that development be of good design and that regard be had to preserving and enhancing heritage assets.

20. The impact of the proposal would be relatively localised and the harm to the ACA identified above would be less than substantial. The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework) makes clear in paragraph 202 that where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal and I return to this in the overall planning balance.

Setting of Listed Building

21. The appeal dwelling and its semi-detached pairing lie immediately to the north of the Methodist Chapel, which is a Grade II lusted building, and fall within its setting. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA Act) requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, or its setting, or any feature of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

22. The proposed alterations to the front elevation along with the proposed gates would be viewed in the context of this listed building. The existing buildings, by reason of their simple and traditional design, and low boundary, do not visually compete with the Methodist Chapel. However, as observed above, the overall design of the alterations would result in an incongruous form of development in the streetscene and, given the close visual relationship, it is likely that attention will be drawn away from the listed building, which would be to the detriment of its setting.

23. Therefore, in this regard, the proposals are again contrary to policies CS5 and CS6 of the North Lincolnshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2011 (the CS) which require that development be of good design and seek to protect the historic environment.

24. For these reasons, I consider that the development would have a negative effect on the setting of the listed building. Such harm would be less than substantial and, as with the first main issue, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Other Matters

25. It has been advanced that the proposed alterations to the windows would increase natural light into the property, reducing the reliance on artificial lighting, and improving the energy efficiency of the property. It is also stated that the scheme would improve the security of the property. Cumulatively, these are environmental, social and economic benefits of the proposals. However, given the limited scale of the development these are benefits to which I can only give limited weight.

26. I note that the appellant has raised various concerns with regard to the manner in which the application has been handled. Such matters are not relevant to the determination of the appeal and this is an issue between the main parties.

Planning Balance and Conclusions

27. I have identified that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the ACA and also to the setting of the Methodist Chapel. The preservation of heritage assets are matters to which I am required to attach considerable importance and great weight. The scheme would deliver some benefits through improvement to the existing housing stock. However, such benefits are essentially private to the appellant. Therefore, the public benefits combined are relatively modest and insufficient to outweigh the great weight which must be attached to the harm to the heritage assets that I have identified.

28. For the above reasons, the proposed development conflicts with the development plan and with the provisions of the Framework in relation to heritage assets, and there are no material considerations, which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

D Cleary

INSPECTOR