



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 21 November 2023

by Mr JP Sargent BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th December 2023

Appeal A: APP/Y2620/W/22/3304537

Seawood House, 56 Freeman Street, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1BA

- 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 S Doolan against the decision of North Norfolk District Council
 - The application Ref PF/22/0275, dated 3 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 31 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of outbuilding and erection of single/2 storey rear extension; replacement dormer to rear.
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Appeal B: APP/Y2620/Y/22/3304536

Seawood House, 56 Freeman Street, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1BA

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr S Doolan against the decision of North Norfolk District Council
 - The application Ref LA/22/0276, dated 3 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 31 May 2022.
 - The works proposed are internal and external works associated with demolition of outbuilding and erection of single/2 storey rear extension; replacement dormer to rear.
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Decisions

Appeal A: APP/Y2620/W/22/3304537

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B: APP/Y2620/Y/22/3304536

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. Although the name of the property was given as Brig Villa on the application forms, I understand it is now called Seawood House.

Main Issues

4. The main issues with these appeals are the effect of the works on the special architectural and historic interest of this listed building, whether they would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the Wells Conservation Area in which the site sits, and whether they would harm the significance of either of these designated heritage assets.

Reasons

5. Seawood House is a Grade II listed 2-storey detached dwelling with further accommodation in its roofspace. According to a plaque it dates from 1835. Its front elevation is well-balanced, symmetrical, and polite, being built of brick with attractive detailing to the windows and door that is typical of the time of its construction. The rear elevation comprises flintwork walling with brick detailing

around the windows, corners and eaves. Although far simpler than the more ornate frontage, this of itself assists an understanding of the building and how it was originally designed and constructed. Such factors contribute to the building's special architectural and historic interest, and mean its significance is architectural and historic. Modern windows and a cumbersome recent dormer detract, to some degree, from the integrity of the building but not sufficiently to mean the overall value of the property is unduly diminished.

6. At the time the applications subject of these appeals were determined, there was a single storey projecting element at the rear that it was intended to demolish. However, the Council has recently granted planning permission and listed building consent for that to be removed and, in effect, the construction of the ground floor elements of the scheme before me. Work has now started on this, and I have taken its presence into account in my reasoning. Therefore, notwithstanding any decisions I may reach, those elements can lawfully proceed. As a result, I have focussed on whether the dormer window can be changed and the first-floor element added.
7. The works would not affect the significance of the property when looking from the front, as they would be concealed at the rear. Moreover, the proposed dormer window would have a lesser impact on the building due to its smaller size and its more sensitive design. As a result, this element of the works would not cause harm to the dwelling's significance.
8. The first-floor rear element would project over the permitted single storey wing, and, although not particularly long, it would nonetheless extend to a point roughly halfway towards the back boundary. As a result, it would lead to the rear of this relatively small house being dominated by new development, and it would increase still further the extent of the original rear elevation being covered by subsequent additions. To my mind, this would erode the understanding and appreciation of the dwelling, and so would cause harm, albeit less than substantial, to its significance.
9. Although I recognise the benefits resulting from the replacement of the dormer and the windows, those there now do not have such an adverse effect as to outweigh the harm caused by the first-floor element.
10. It was said the works would lead to the rear being cramped. However, the property's rear yard is to be small and constrained in any event, and I see no reason why this should be exacerbated unduly by the first-floor addition.
11. To the west of No 56 is Chadd House, another Grade II listed property. This stands with a gable fronting Freeman Street. It then runs back into the site, to beyond the wall at the northernmost end of Seawood House's curtilage, and is separated from the appellant's property by a garden area. Insofar as this appeal is concerned, Chadd House has a historical and architectural significance, with its detailing and built form reflecting its age. It is already enclosed to a great extent though by No 56. Given this, and noting the separation involved, I consider the scheme would not adversely affect the setting of this neighbouring listed building and so would not cause harm to its significance.
12. Turning to the conservation area, this is focussed on the quay, and the network of narrow streets lined by buildings of various ages and styles that reflect the growth and functioning of this historic port over time. Such factors contribute to its character and appearance and add to its significance. Seawood House, as a distinctive listed building with a notable presence in Freeman Street, makes a positive contribution to this significance.

13. While having no impact on the frontage of the property, the dwelling's rear can be seen from outside the conservation area on the playing fields, play area, car park and footpath behind. However, in these restricted views it stands amongst the varied buildings and their multiplicity of extensions that line this side of Freeman Street. As such, the development would not appear discordant when seen in this wider context. However, despite this, as the works would adversely affect a listed building that must be an important element of the conservation area, less than substantial harm would occur to the significance of that designated heritage asset, and to its character and appearance.
14. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset, and any harm to its significance should require clear and convincing justification. Moreover, if less than substantial harm is caused to the significance of any such asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits.
15. Although the proposal facilitates the internal reorganisation of the dwelling, if the appeal was dismissed I am not satisfied that the role or use of the building would be in question or that other approaches cannot be achieved. This factor therefore does not outweigh the harm identified, and, for the reasons given above, neither do the benefits of the dormer or the replacement windows.
16. Accordingly I conclude the first-floor rear extension would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of this listed building, and as a consequence it would not preserve the character or appearance of the Wells Conservation Area, causing less than substantial harm to the significance of both of those designated heritage assets. In the absence of any public benefits to outweigh this harm, this aspect of the proposals would conflict with Policies EN4 and EN8 in the *North Norfolk Core Strategy*, which broadly seek high quality design that has regard to local distinctiveness, and preserves and enhances the significance of heritage assets. It would also conflict with the Framework.

Other Matters

17. There would be no increase in the number of windows facing Chadd House and, although the first-floor window would be closer, views of that neighbouring property would generally be more angled. Chadd House already experiences a sense of enclosure from No 56 and this would not be exacerbated to any material degree by the works. The living conditions of residents at that property would therefore not be unreasonably harmed.

Conclusion

18. I conclude these appeals should be dismissed.

JP Sargent

INSPECTOR