The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 November 2023

by David Cross BA(Hons) PgDip(Dist) TechIOA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U2750/D/23/3331639
The Old School, Escrick Park Gardens, Escrick, North Yorkshire, Selby YO19 6LZ

- 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 and Mrs Aitchison against the decision of North Yorkshire Council.
- The application Ref ZG2023/0637/HPA, dated 21 June 2023, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2023.
- The development proposed is the alteration of a window to a door and a replacement door on the east elevation of The Old School, Escrick.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of the development provided on the planning application form has been replaced by an amended version on the decision notice and in the Appeal Statement. I consider that subsequent description to accurately represent the proposal and I have therefore used it within this decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building, with due regard to the Escrick Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. Escrick was developed as an Estate Village, and the CA covers much of the village including the historic core and the former parkland and Escrick Hall. The historic development of the village saw the evolution of a distinctive style, including along Main Street which borders the appeal site. The development history and design ethos are features which contribute to the importance of the CA as a designated heritage asset.

5. The Old School makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA, although the appellants' Heritage Statement considers that this is due primarily to the low height of the building using traditional materials and design features such as the large decorative chimney and roof details.

6. The windows in the east elevation in their current form are not original features of the school and do not fully reflect the design ethos of the CA. However, the

windows are of a traditional appearance which adds to the character of the building and are an indication of its previous use as a school. I have had regard to the evidence provided by the appellants in respect of the evolution of the windows over time, including the lowering of the cills. But although there have been various alterations and additions to the school building, the institutional nature of the building is still apparent even allowing for its conversion to residential use, and the windows on the east elevation contribute to this character.

7. The appellant refers to the Parish Council which has not identified the appeal site as being of particular significance within the village, and the site is not identified as a non-designated heritage asset. Nevertheless, the site is in a prominent corner location and the school would have been one of the focal points in the historic development of the village.

8. The lowered window and the introduction of a double door are overtly residential features that are more appropriate to the rear elevation of a dwelling. Even allowing for the existing alterations to the building, this element of the proposal would appear as an incongruous feature on this main elevation and would detract from what remains of the institutional character of the building. Although the windows on this part of the elevation are not symmetrical, the proposal would further increase the unbalanced appearance and would appear as a jarring element. As a result, the appeal proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host building and the contribution it makes to the appreciation of the development of the CA. On that basis, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA.

9. I am mindful that the layout of the site is such that the only garden available to residents is to the east of the building. But the improved access, outlook and levels of light provided by the proposal are not sufficient to overcome the identified harm arising to the host building and the CA.

10. The building is screened by a hedge along the boundary, and the proposed window would only be fleetingly visible from the public domain via the access from Escrick Park Gardens. However, the retention of the hedge cannot be relied upon, and its removal either in full or in part would enable a view of the incongruous nature of the proposal on the main elevation of the building.

11. The description of the development includes reference to a replacement door, and the submitted Appeal Statement refers to the replacement of the living room door with a window which retains the appearance of a door. The replacement of the door is not referred to in the reason for refusal. However, it has not been set out whether this element of the proposal is severable from the proposed window alteration, in particular whether this would enable appropriate access to the dwelling should the window alteration not be allowed. It has therefore not been established that this matter could be addressed by a 'split' decision, where permission is granted solely for the replacement door.

12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host building and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Although the harm to the CA would be less than substantial, there are no public or other benefits that would outweigh that harm. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies ENV1 and ENV25 of the Selby Local Plan 2005 as well as SP18 and SP19 of the Core Strategy 2013

which together seek to ensure that development takes account of the features important to the character of the area and would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. The proposal would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework with regards to achieving well-designed places as well as conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR