



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 October 2024

by M J Francis BA (Hons) MA MSc MCIfA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X4725/D/24/3349421

103 Pontefract Road, Ackworth, Pontefract, Wakefield WF7 7EL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Richard Coulson against the decision of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00779/FUL.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing outbuilding and conservatory for construction of two storey extensions to front, side and rear and new windows to side elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Planning permission has previously been granted¹ for extensions to the rear, an attached garage, and changes to the front elevation, including alterations to the windows. I saw when I visited the site that works to the property, including the construction of two storey rear extensions, had commenced.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property, the surrounding area and whether it would preserve or enhance the High Ackworth Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a two storey, detached, stone period house with stone bays and a later two storey side extension. It has two, prominent, stone chimneys on the front roof slope. The property is in a large plot with an extensive area of garden to the rear. The front garden, located to the side of the drive, has a dense tree cover along the boundary with Pontefract Road.
5. The site is within the CA. The significance of the CA, as it relates to this case, is that the host building is one of the many properties, originally with outbuildings to the rear, in generous plots set back from Pontefract Road in the former agricultural village of High Ackworth. No 103 Pontefract Road (No 103), which likely dates from the 1920s, is sited alongside Nos 99 and 101 Pontefract Road, all of which are detached stone properties with a driveway to the side and set amongst trees and greenery. This is a rare grouping of

¹ Ref 24/00277/FUL

similar, traditional housing in the CA which contains a mixture of building styles. This part of the CA is characterised by stone boundary walls, hedges and mature trees.

6. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Paragraph 205 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, in this case the CA, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
7. Whilst the host property already has a later two storey extension, which is not of historical interest, it has been constructed of similar stone and slate to the house and is set back from the front elevation. Moreover, the original, stone built, robust chimneys on the front roofscape highlight and maintain the dominance of the original dwelling.
8. The appeal proposal would bring the side extension forward so that it lines up with the front elevation of the property. At the centre of the house there would be a pitched roof projection with a balcony at 1st floor level over the entrance to the house. This would result in a symmetrical frontage. While some properties within the CA may have originally been symmetrically designed, this does not apply to No 103. Moreover, the previous approval² retained the setback to the side elevation which would ensure that later extensions would appear subservient to the original property.
9. The overall massing of the building would already change because of the approved large extensions to the rear. Creating a continuous frontage, including an attached garage, and moving the chimney to the roof of the new extension, would create an overly dominant façade. Consequently, the characteristics of the original house would be lost. In addition, the forward extension over the doorway, with a balcony and the modern style glazing either side of the front door, would be unsympathetic to the style of this robustly built property. It would remove the interest and character inherent in the original building, thereby causing harm.
10. I noted when I visited that I could see from the front of No 103, part of the side elevation of No 101. This has the same chimneys, creating a uniformity and rhythm to the roofscape of these properties. The houses, together with No 99, were built around the same time and set amongst the greenery of the CA, have all been altered to some extent. However, whilst there are only glimpsed views of the houses as a group, the details and the traditional architectural design and quality of the materials contribute significantly to the character and appearance of the CA. Whilst No 103 is not listed, it does, from its location and design, form part of this grouping of dwellings which is important to the appearance of the CA. The proposed design of the front elevation would be inappropriate to the character of the dwelling and those buildings around it and would harm the character of the area.
11. Given that I have found that harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the host property, it follows that the contribution that the host dwelling makes to the significance of the CA, as a designated heritage asset would also be harmed. Therefore, the proposal would harm and thus fail to

² Ref 24/00277/FUL

preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. It would therefore conflict with section 72(1) of the Act.

12. In assessing the degree of harm to the significance of the CA, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the harm would be less than substantial. In such circumstances, paragraph 208 requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits. Whilst the appellants have lived in High Ackworth for many years and wish to improve their property for their family, as well as not harm the CA, it has not been shown that the benefits from the development would be any more than a private benefit. As such, this would not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset to which I must give great weight.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the host property and the surrounding area, and it would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. It would not accord with Policies LP63 and LP64 of the Wakefield District Local Plan 2036, Volume 1³, 2024, which requires development proposals that affect a heritage asset to conserve or enhance the significance of the asset. In addition, it would not accord with the objectives of chapter 16 of the Framework to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Other Matters

14. Although the appellants state that they would be prepared to amend their plans with regards to the front door, stone façade and balcony area, I am mindful that the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme to overcome the Council's concerns and reasons for refusal. Therefore, I have determined the appeal based on the plans as submitted.
15. The CA consists of a variety of housing types in differing materials. I acknowledge that the appellants are seeking to restore the house including installing sash windows and cast guttering. In doing so they have tried to work with the Council's Conservation Officer to achieve a solution. However, whilst the proposal has the support of a local councillor and there have been no third-party objections, this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
16. Whilst the appellants consider that the application has not been looked at objectively by the Council, particularly as parts of the proposal have already been approved, these are matters between the main parties which do not affect the outcome of the appeal.

Conclusion

17. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh the identified harm and that warrant a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

M J Francis

INSPECTOR

³ Development Strategy, Strategic and Local Policies