
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2025

by **E Catchside BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/24/3348653

The Stables, Manor Road, Staverton, Daventry, Northants NN11 6JD

- 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 Robin Aston against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application reference is 2023/6978/FULL.
 - The development proposed is erection of eight 6ft x 6ft fencing panels and trellis.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the development is taken from the application form insofar as it describes development.
3. The submitted plans do not include elevations of the development. However, the application was submitted retrospectively, and I observed the fence on my site visit. I have therefore considered the appeal based on my observations of the development as well as the submitted evidence.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised in December 2024. Because the changes do not materially affect the main issues in this case, no prejudice is caused in me deciding the appeal without reverting to the parties for further comment.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Staverton Conservation Area (CA); and
 - whether the setting of the Grade II listed Stonedge would be preserved.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal site lies on the prominent corner of Manor Road and Well Lane, near to the picturesque village green at the core of Staverton village. The road has a traditional rural character, owing to the narrowness of the lane and the well-preserved stone and brick buildings and walls which contribute to the distinctive local vernacular. The verdant character of the tree-lined footpath along Well Lane marks the transition from the settlement to the rural landscape beyond.

7. Most of the village, including the appeal site, falls within the Staverton Conservation Area. 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 the CA.
8. The Staverton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) describes that the special interest of the CA is partly derived from the form of the settlement and the rich architecture of its buildings, which reflect the evolution of this rural settlement over time. The CAAMP identifies there is special interest in the *“close-knit and enclosed character of the village’s historic core by the many stone boundary walls and buildings located immediately adjacent to the road”*.
9. The Stables is a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). From the evidence, and my observations, its significance is derived from its historical association with a former farm and its architectural features, including its brick and stone facades, which are in-keeping with the material palette that prevails on Manor Road and throughout the CA. The brick wall that fronts Manor Road is noted within the CAAMP as a particularly prominent boundary treatment within the CA. The host property therefore makes a positive contribution to the CA due to its broadly central location and its contribution to the local vernacular.
10. Even if it were painted or stained, the timber material of the fence lacks congruence with the brick and stone materials that dominate along Manor Road and in the CA, as well as with the leafy boundary treatment on this side of Well Lane. Moreover, due to its width and height, the development is prominent in views identified as important within the CAAMP, including views towards The Stables from the village green and along the footpath on Well Lane. Due to its siting on this prominent corner, the development detracts from the cohesive local vernacular that is distinctive to Staverton and it therefore fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
11. I conclude that the development has caused harm to the character and appearance of the CA. Consequently, there would be conflict with Policies S10 and BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (Adopted December 2014) (CS), which seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets. Policy ENV7 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) for Daventry District 2011-2029 (Adopted February 2020) (LP) states that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification. I shall consider this further in the overall heritage balance.

Listed building

12. The appeal site lies close to and within the setting of the Grade II listed Stonedge. Section 66(1) of the Act requires that special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting and any features of special architectural interest which it possesses.
13. The evidence suggests that the significance of Stonedge is derived in part from its architecture, which reflects the era in which it was constructed, as well as its contribution to the local vernacular in Staverton. Amongst other architectural details, the listing description notes the ironstone façade with brick cornice, brick stacks, window details, and central doorway with concrete lintel as notable features.

14. Due to its proximity, siting, and architectural features, The Stables aids in our understanding of Stonedge as part of a historical settlement that has evolved over time. It therefore makes a positive contribution to its setting and significance.
15. Whilst visibility of the development from Stonedge is restricted by the intervening boundary brick wall, it is prominent in views towards the listed building from the village green. Due to its size, timber appearance, and siting in the foreground of those views, the fence detracts from the experience of the listed building as a well-preserved structure of prominence within a cohesive wider street scene. Owing to the nature and scale of the development, the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset through this development in its setting is less than substantial. This harm requires clear and convincing justification in accordance with Policy ENV7 of the LP, which is a matter I shall return to later in this decision.
16. I conclude that the setting of the Grade II listed Stonedge would not be preserved. It follows that there would be conflict with Policies S10 and BN5 of the CS, which seek to sustain and enhance heritage assets.

Heritage Balance

17. The Framework states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that the less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
18. The fence was erected to provide privacy and security for the occupants of The Stables following the necessary removal of trees along the Well Lane boundary. However, these benefits are private rather than public. Therefore, they do not meet the test set out in paragraph 215 of the Framework.
19. Nonetheless, it is clearly the appellant's intention to establish a hedgerow boundary along the Well Lane frontage in the longer term, and some public benefit would arise should the fence provide protection for the growing plants which, in time, could preserve or enhance the tree-lined character of the footpath and the CA. The fence also reinstates a sense of enclosure along this boundary and would help to conceal any overgrown vegetation that develops behind it from public view. Indeed, there is evidence of some third-party support for the scheme.
20. However, I am not convinced the development is the least harmful way of achieving these public benefits or providing a secure boundary to the property, either in the short term or on a permanent basis. For this reason, it would not be appropriate to allow the appeal for a temporary period whilst the hedgerow planting becomes established. Overall, I attribute limited weight to the benefits of the scheme, and this would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused to the CA.
21. There is no clear and convincing justification for the harm that has been caused to the CA and to the significance of the listed building through development within its setting. It follows that, in addition to the conflict with Policies S10 and BN5 of the CS, there would also be conflict with Policy ENV7 of the LP and the historic environment protection policies in the Framework.

Conclusion

22. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

E Catcheside

INSPECTOR