
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 October 2016

by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 24 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/W/16/3148135

1&2 Abbeycroft, The Sands, Whalley BB7 9TN

- 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 Peter Fletcher against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2016/0022, dated 7 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 February 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of external toilet block and the construction of a single storey extension at the rear of 1 & 2 Abbeycroft.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest and significance of the listed building; the effect of the proposal on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings and linked to that whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Whalley Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Abbeycroft is a Grade II listed building dating from the mid C17 and altered in the late C19. It was originally thought to be a single dwelling but is now in use as four separate properties. It is a tall, visually robust, linear structure built in sandstone rubble with a steeply pitched roof. Set at a right angle to The Sands, the building has vehicular access to the front and long gardens at the rear. The boundary of No1, which lies at the end of the row and abuts The Sands, is marked by a stone boundary wall.
4. The site lies within the Whalley Conservation Area and borders the Whalley Abbey northwest gateway, Grade I listed; Scheduled Ancient Monument. In addition it lies within the setting of the Grade II listed buildings Abbey Presbytery and Whalley Viaduct and the Grade II* listed building, Sands Cottage. These buildings and their environs, which have a tranquil rural character, form a little-altered setting to the site, which in turn makes a prominent and positive contribution to character and appearance of the conservation area. The combination of these elements makes the site highly significant and sensitive to change. The special interest of Abbeycroft as a listed building lies primarily in its age and rarity, its architectural evolution, its

- historic use and development and its group value and setting with other listed structures.
5. It is proposed to construct a single storey extension to the rear of 1 and 2 Abbeycroft in order to create a garden room for both properties. The extension would be a flat roofed structure with a lead faced roof. External walls would be predominantly of full height glazing set in a powder coated aluminium frame, inset with sandstone panels. To facilitate the extension a small detached toilet block would be demolished.
 6. Many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing uses. It is clear to me that the design of the proposed extension has been carefully considered. The main part of the roof canopy would be set away from the fabric of the rear elevation. Areas of glazing would provide the structure with a lightweight character as well as providing glimpses of the original fabric.
 7. However, the structure would be almost double the depth of the existing building and would extend some way beyond the existing two-storey projection, itself a substantial element of the building. In addition, the wrap around style of the extension would be at odds with the linear form of the building as a whole. Whilst I acknowledge that the height of the extension would be significantly lower than that of the host building, at almost 3m high and of the depth proposed it would, nevertheless, be a sizeable structure. As a result of its position and size, coupled with its contemporary character, it seems to me that the extension would draw the eye and would compete with, rather than be visually subordinate to, the character of the listed building.
 8. Furthermore, the extension would project forward of the side elevation towards The Sands and thereby be an obvious and prominent feature in the public realm. I accept that the stone boundary wall would partly obscure views of the extension. Nevertheless, the height of the wall is not consistent and parts of the extension would be visible for a considerable distance along The Sands in both directions. The presence of the extension would also be apparent at night when illuminated. Whilst I accept that the extension would extend across only part of the terrace as a whole, for the reasons above, I am not persuaded that it would be a sensitive addition.
 9. For these reasons the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, or the setting of neighbouring listed buildings. In addition, the proposal would not preserve the character or appearance of the conservation area. Consequently the proposal would not meet the requirements of s66 (1) and s72 (1) of the Planning (Listed buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
 10. Furthermore, the proposal would not comply with policies DME4 and DMG1 or Key Statement EN5 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy which seek in various ways to conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings.
 11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out at paragraph 132 that great weight should be given to the heritage assets' conservation. Paragraph 134 of the Framework states that where a proposal

would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, as in this case, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

12. The existing ground floor accommodation in Nos 1 and 2 is limited in terms of its size and configuration. I accept that the proposal would provide the residents with additional space that would enhance living conditions. I have also taken into consideration comments that the dwellings were flooded in 2015 but there is no conclusive evidence before me on the likelihood of future flooding or the impact the proposed extension would have on it. This limits the weight I can give the matter as a benefit of the scheme.
13. The blockwork toilet block has clearly existed for some considerable time and no objections have been raised by the Council to its demolition. However, whilst the block is somewhat of an anomaly, it has a neutral impact on the significance of the listed building and its removal would therefore be of only limited benefit.
14. Consequently, I am not persuaded that these matters equate to a public benefit, including the need to secure optimum viable use of the building, such that would outweigh the harm I have identified; harm which, given the statutory requirements of the Act and advice within the Framework, attracts great weight on the negative side of the balance.

Conclusion

15. For these reasons and taking into account all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

S Ashworth

INSPECTOR