

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2023

by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/D/23/3321319

5 Sandy Lane, Brewood, Staffordshire ST19 9ET

- 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 Warren Haynes against the decision of South Staffordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00494/FUL, dated 17 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 5 April 2023.
 - The development proposed is first floor front/side extension above existing ground floor bedroom along with rendering and cladding of the exterior and excavation of earth at front of property to create extra vehicular parking with new retaining wall, external staircase and associated landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development above is taken from the decision notice and appeal form as this is the most accurate and succinct version provided.
3. The appeal development proposes various amendments to the host dwelling and appeal site. Of relevance to this appeal, however, are the proposed alterations to the front, lower section of the site adjacent to the existing garage.
4. At the time of my site visit, alterations had already been made to the front, lower part of the appeal site. For the avoidance of doubt, I have made my decision based on the plans submitted with this appeal.

Main Issue

5. Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Brewood Conservation Area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site falls within the Brewood Conservation Area (the BCA) whose significance is partly derived from the narrow, village lanes winding away from the historic core of Brewood. The prevalent boundary type of sandstone walls and mature landscaping along with the raised, set back positioning of built form create a narrow, enclosed route along this part of Sandy Lane which contributes towards a strong rural character in this part of the BCA.
7. The proposal involves extensive excavation of earth to the front of the appeal site along with the loss of the sandstone wall which previously bound part of

the site from the highway. This, along with the already large gap in this part of the street scene due to the driveway of the appeal dwelling being connected to that of 3 Sandy Lane, results in a vast gap in the highway boundary. This jars markedly with the enclosed characteristics of the street scene and relatively continuous stretches of boundaries. The additional area of hardstanding close to the carriageway is also highly uncharacteristic in the street scene and adds further to this harmful void and expanse of openness.

8. I appreciate that the existing garage at the appeal site is already somewhat of an anomaly in the street scene given its prominent position forward of the main arrangement of built form. Nevertheless, based on the evidence before me, it seems that the former sandstone wall and the landbank sweeping up to the front of the appeal dwelling, now removed, assisted in assimilating this structure into the landscape.
9. The proposed retaining wall and the wall to the side boundary would be of a substantial height and would be visually dominant in the street scene. Along with the now more exposed garage due to the harmful erosion of the land, the overall extent of this built form would be incongruous and intrusive thus failing to preserve the characteristics of the BCA.
10. The proposed areas of planting and new green roof to the garage would be insufficient to successfully integrate this uncharacteristic void and built form and, moreover, there would be no guarantees that any planting would remain in perpetuity. Further, the introduction of stone to the side wall and the use of an earthy toned render to the garage and rear wall would not overcome these concerns.
11. It is alluded that more stone wall is proposed than was removed. Be that as it may, the proposal fails to retain the enclosed characteristics of the locality due to the siting of the proposed wall.
12. Given the scale of the proposed development, the level of harm it would cause to the BCA would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is clear that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
13. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. I am not convinced that the proposal would result in a net gain to wildlife or landscaping. No other benefits have been put to me. Therefore, the harm I have identified would not be outweighed.
14. Taking all the above into consideration, and notwithstanding the lack of objection from the Council's Conservation Officer, the proposed development would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the BCA. It therefore conflicts with Policy EQ3 and EQ4 of the South Staffordshire Council Core Strategy (December 2012) which together seek to ensure that developments do not harm designated heritage assets and the local distinctiveness of the area.

Other Matters

15. The adjacent dwelling, 7 Sandy Lane, is a grade II listed building whose significance lies in its architectural interest and former industrial use. As the

proposed side wall would follow the height of the adjacent boundary of No 7, thus revealing more of its front elevation and therefore its significance, I consider that it would not harm its setting. This, however, is a neutral matter.

16. I note that the proposal includes steps from the parking bay at the front to the dwelling above, which it is suggested would provide safer access to the dwelling in poor weather conditions than the steeply inclined driveway. However, I am not convinced that this is the only way in which stepped access could be obtained to the dwelling, given the extent of the existing driveway.

Conclusion

17. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when taken as a whole and there are no other considerations which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

H Ellison

INSPECTOR