

Application No's: A) 171534/HOU and B) 171341/LBC

Address: St Johns Lodge, 4 Star Road, Caversham

Proposal: A) Partial demolition of external wall and erection of single storey rear extension
B) Internal and external alterations associated with partial demolition of external wall and erection of single storey rear extension

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site is a Grade II listed building located on the eastern side of Star Road, to the south of the junction with Gosbrook Road.

The listing description is as follows:

'STAR ROAD 1. 5128 (East Side) Caversham No 4 (St John's Lodge) SU 7274 6/281A 22.7.76. II 2. C17 origins with later extensions. 3 cottages of varying heights and dates, rendered and pebbledashed fronts. 2 storeys with modern tiled roofs, old tiles to rear. Centre and right hand cottages 2 bays each. Centre probably C17 with 2 modern 3 light oriels on 1st floor and verandah porch on ground floor, central reeded doorway (interior with contemporary stud partitions). Right hand part probably late C18, glazing bar sashes on 1st floor with blind boxes, central porch on ground floor, now 2 window. Left hand part early C19, 1 bay. Rear some glazing bar sashes, exposed timberwork in 2 gables, and in gabled break.'

The site is within Flood Zones 2 and 3 as designated by the Environment Agency. The surrounding area is predominantly residential, with a wide variety of typologies. The application site is not located within a conservation area; there are listed buildings to the south east of the site along Paddock Road.

Proposal:

This is an application for planning permission and listed building consent for the partial demolition of an external wall and the erection of a single storey rear extension.

To facilitate the extension, the proposals include the removal of a ground floor rear wall forming a hall joining across the rear of the building, in order to form access from the proposed extension into the existing building.

The extension would be of a modern style and of an irregular shape, with flat roof and would consist of full height glazed panels and rendered panels between and black timber fascia boards.

Plans Submitted:

The agent supplied the following plans and documents:

Drawing No: Location Plan PL.1200

Drawing No: Existing Block Plan

Drawing No: Existing Elevations Sheet 1 PL.1500

Drawing No: Existing Elevations Sheet 2 PL.1501

Drawing No: Existing Ground Floor Plan PL.1300

Drawing No: Existing First Floor Plan PL.1301

Drawing No: Existing Roof Plan PL.1302

Received 4th September 2017

Design and Access Statement

Heritage Impact Assessment

Received 4th September 2017

Drawing No: Proposed Ground Floor Plan PL.1310 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed First Floor Plan PL.1311 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Roof Plan PL.1312 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 PL.1510 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 PL.1511 Rev A

Received 6th October 2017

Accompanying Statement

Received 6th October 2017

Revised Heritage Impact Assessment

Received 18th October 2017

Relevant Planning History:

171340/LBC Provision of temporary support to gable wall until remedial measures are made.

Replacement of timber members and installation of lateral support system to brick infill panels.

Permitted

041188/LBC Conversion of existing store to shower room at the rear on the first floor. Permitted

970784/FUL Two storey, three bedroom detached house with integral garage. Permitted

960235/FUL Two semi-detached three bedroom two storey houses with integral garages. Refused

940587/FUL Garage with WC and store - replacement for existing stable. Permitted
940936/LBC Demolition of stables (current use storage and garage).

Consultation Response:

The RBC Heritage Officer: Objection.

Proposals

The proposed development consists of:

- Addition of a single storey, modern-style, rear extension with a flat roof and rooflights;
- The proposed extension to consist of full height glazed panels and rendered panels between and black timber fascia boards;
- Removal of most of the rear, ground floor wall forming a hall joining the former cottages, in order to form access from the proposed extension into the existing building; and
- Removal of two segmental headed windows in the rear ground-floor elevation.

Design and Access Statement

The '*Design and Access Statement*' (Fineline Architects) shows that the rear hall wall, proposed for partial removal, is of unknown date and has not been considered fully. By looking at the evidence of the historic fabric of the building, including the remnants of 'lining-out' at the upper levels, it appears that the link was built historically, probably at the time of amalgamation of the three cottages, in an attempt to blend and harmonise the separate buildings together. This would appear to have taken place in the 18th or early 19th centuries.

In addition, the '*Heritage Impact Assessment*' (Fineline Architects) states that alterations to the historic fireplace (located in the existing kitchen) would consist of:

The existing fireplace and chimney located in the existing kitchen is to be opened up and reused. A new log burning stove is to be installed.

No further details are given for this proposal and the floorplans do not show any structural amendments to the fireplace or chimney.

In addition, that the:

Suspended timber floors

The existing floorboards on first floor are to carefully removed and set aside. Leveling strips are to installed over the existing joist to level out the irregular floor. The existing floor boards are to be reinstated in the correct order once the levelling strips have been installed.

No further details are given for this proposal.

Discussion

The proposal to remove the ground-floor rear hall wall would remove part of the historic fabric of the building, although the date is uncertain as no full heritage assessment of the significance of the building, and this wall in particular, is provided. The loss of this wall would also remove two ground-floor windows potentially of unknown date, but potentially Victorian in origin.

The D&A statement mentions the 'opening-out' of the kitchen fireplace and chimney, but no further details are shown and any structural changes to the fireplace/chimney are likely to be considered as having an unacceptable, harmful effect on the fabric of the building. The floorboards at first floor are proposed for removal and levelling. Again these are likely to be historic and no details are provided; these changes would also be considered harmful to the fabric of the building.

Recommendations

In summary the proposed works of alteration and extension have not properly considered the architecturally and historically significant elements of the Listed Building or prepared a statement of significance (heritage statement) setting out those elements. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires that applicants for planning permission describe the value of any heritage assets affected by a development, including any contribution made by their setting, at a level of detail proportionate to the assets' importance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal (positive and negative) on their value (DCLG et al, 2012, paras. 128). The proposals would remove elements of the building which are considered to be of special interest and would therefore have an unacceptably harmful effect on the fabric of the Listed Building.

Follow up comments subsequent to the submission of revised plans:

Discussion

The amended proposal would approximately 4.5m of the ground-floor rear wall forming the rear hall. This would remove part of the historic fabric of the building. The wall proposed for partial removal, includes the remnants of 'lining-out' at the upper levels, and appears that the link was built in the early to mid-19th centuries, probably as an extension which attempts to blend and harmonise the separate phases of construction together.

This rear wall is at least of Victorian origin and may be older, as it forms an extension to the original to provide a corridor to the rear of the building; the exterior render on the wall shows

evidence of having been 'lined-out', an historic technique which was used to imitate expensive ashlar masonry. The extension has a parapet which partially disguises the pitched roof behind it. Both these elements indicate a degree of design which aims to harmonise this elevation of the building, giving it a uniform façade, with pretensions to polite architecture in what was, originally, a vernacular building. These elements indicate that the rear elevation was considered important enough to require designed elements, and was not merely a 'blank' utilitarian area of little or no aesthetic value. The rear elevation therefore is considered to contribute to the significance of the Listed Building making legible the Listed Building's history and architectural development. It should be noted that an existing 'infilled' doorway is evident between the hall and the gable end of the building. this could offer an opportunity for re-use to provide greater access into the garden.

The addition of the design for the new extension consists of a single storey, modern-style flat roof structure with rooflights and full height glazed panels with rendered panels between, black timber fascia boards with large over-hanging eaves. The design is considered to be overly large in proportion to the ground floor area of the Listed Building and does not relate well to it; as a result, the proposal would appear incongruous, bulky and dominant within views from the rear and reduce its legibility as a historic building.

The requirement to remove most of the rear wall in order to 'open-out' the building to a new extension and the garden area cannot be achieved at the cost of the loss of historic fabric and the construction of an overly-dominant extension. The scale of any extension to a Listed Building has to be tempered to the scale of the original building and respect elements of architectural and historic interest.

Recommendations

In summary the proposed works of alteration and extension of the Listed Building would lead to unnecessary loss of historic fabric which contributes to the significance of the Listed Building and would result in an overly large, incongruous and dominant rear extension which reduces legibility.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 and the NPPF create a strong presumption against the grant of planning permission for development which will harm designated heritage assets, requiring particularly strong countervailing factors to be identified before this presumption can be treated as overridden. No adequate justification for this harm to the Listed Building is provided.

Conclusions

It is recommended that this application is refused as it is considered that the proposed development would harm the significance and legibility of the Listed Building contrary to considerations as set out in section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 would the requirements of the PPG or the NPPF and RBC Policy CS33.

Tree Officer: Verbally confirmed no objection subject to conditions and informatives.

Public consultation:

6 nearby occupiers were formally consulted. A site notice was erected and a press notice was published on 21/09/17, expiring on 12/10/17. No neighbour letters of representation have been received.

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

The agent was advised of concerns relating to the intrusion into historic fabric and the scale of the proposed extension. Whilst revised plans were received to try and overcome the issues raised, these were not considered satisfactory and the agent was revised that the applications were still attracting refusals. The agent opted to receive the decision notices and an extension of time was agreed until 10th November 2017.

No formal pre-application advice was sought prior to the submission of this application.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance and Legal Context

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the

Reading Local Development Framework 'Core Strategy' 2008 (Altered 2015), 'Reading Central Area Action Plan' 2009 and 'Sites and Detailed Policies Document' 2012 (Altered 2015).

National Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Historic England Good Practice Guide Note Number 2: managing significance in decision-taking

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) (Altered 2015) Policies:

CS7: Design and the Public Realm

CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

CS35: Flooding

CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)

DM4: Safeguarding Amenity

DM9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

Supplementary Planning Guidance - A Design Guide to House Extensions (2003)

Appraisal

Design, impact on the host property, historic character and appearance of the listed building and street scene

Paragraph 132 of the NPPF details that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset great weight should be given to the assets conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be and any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Policy CS33 states that the character and integrity of listed buildings will be preserved, and the Council will seek to enhance the settings of listed buildings wherever appropriate, by ensuring that new development in their vicinity is sympathetic.

The amended proposal would project approximately 5.5m at its deepest point off the ground-floor rear wall forming the rear hall. This would remove part of the historic fabric of the building. The wall proposed for partial removal, includes the remnants of 'lining-out' at the upper levels, and appears that the link was built in the early to mid-19th centuries, probably as an extension which attempts to blend and harmonise the separate phases of construction together.

This rear wall is at least of Victorian origin and may be older, as it forms an extension to the original to provide a corridor to the rear of the building; the exterior render on the wall shows evidence of having been 'lined-out', an historic technique which was used to imitate expensive ashlar masonry. The extension has a parapet which partially disguises the pitched roof behind it. Both these elements indicate a degree of design which aims to harmonise this elevation of the building, giving it a uniform façade, with pretensions to polite architecture in what was, originally, a vernacular building. These elements indicate that the rear elevation was considered important enough to require designed elements, and was not merely a 'blank' utilitarian area of little or no aesthetic value. The rear elevation therefore is considered to contribute to the significance of the Listed Building, making the Listed Building's history and architectural development legible. It should be noted that an existing 'infilled' doorway is evident between the hall and the gable end of the building. This could offer an opportunity for re-use to provide greater access into the garden.

The design for the new extension consists of a single storey, modern-style flat roof structure with rooflights and full height glazed panels with rendered panels between, black timber fascia boards with large over-hanging eaves. The design is considered to be overly large in proportion to the ground floor area of the Listed Building and does not relate well to it; indeed, at its deepest point the depth of approximately 5.5m is almost the same as the main dwelling, and, with the extension projecting past the gable rear gable end, which, as can clearly be seen from the proposed floor plans, does not appear a subordinate feature in this respect. As a result, the proposal would appear an overly incongruous, bulky, unsympathetic and dominant feature within views from the rear, and in the context of the host property, reducing its legibility as an historic building.

The requirement to remove most of the rear wall in order to 'open-out' the building to a new extension and the garden area cannot be achieved at the cost of the loss of historic fabric and the construction of an overly-dominant extension. It is considered that the scale of any extension to a Listed Building has to be tempered to the scale of the original building and respect elements of architectural and historic interest. Indeed, whilst there is no objection as such to a contemporary design approach, this should not be to the detriment of the architectural and historic integrity of the listed building and its setting.

Given the above, the proposed works of alteration and extension of the Listed Building would lead to unnecessary loss of historic fabric which contributes to the significance of the Listed Building and would result in an overly large, incongruous and dominant rear extension which reduces legibility.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 and the NPPF create a strong presumption against the grant of planning permission for development which will harm designated heritage assets, requiring particularly strong countervailing factors to be identified before this presumption can be treated as overridden. Whilst a Heritage Statement has been submitted with the application, no adequate justification for this harm to the Listed Building is provided.

The proposed extension, of the scale and design proposed, would not be in keeping with the proportions of the application property. Given the above, wherein the proposed extension would appear as an overly bulky, unsympathetic and dominant feature that would not relate well to the host dwelling, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policies CS7 and CS33 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015) and Policy DM9 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance - A Design Guide to House Extensions (2003)

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Given the position of the proposed extension and distance to the common boundaries and neighbouring properties themselves, it is not considered to result in any material loss of amenity in terms of loss of light, privacy or overbearing impact to any neighbouring property. As such, it is considered that the proposals would comply with policy DM4.

It is acknowledged that the proposal would improve the quality of accommodation for current and future occupiers (aligning with policy DM4), by providing more spacious living accommodation. However, when applying a critical planning balance of all material considerations, this planning benefit is not considered to outweigh the significant harm to the listed building and related design matters, as outlined elsewhere in this appraisal.

Impact on flood risk

The site is located within flood zones 2 and 3. The National Planning Policy Framework states that a specific flood risk assessment is required for all proposals for new development in Flood Zones 2 & 3. The key consideration is ensuring that flood risk is not increased elsewhere and that development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant. The National Planning Practice Guidance states that *"A flood risk assessment should also be appropriate to the scale, nature and location of the development. For example, where the development is an extension to an existing house (for which planning permission is required) which would not significantly increase the number of people present in an area at risk of flooding, the local planning authority would generally need a less detailed assessment to be able to reach an informed decision on the planning application"*.

The applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment for this site. The report states that in accordance with the Environment agency's guidelines for minor extensions in flood Zones 2 and 3, the floor levels of the extension will be set no lower than the existing floor level, and flood proofing of the proposed development will be incorporated where appropriate. The proposed extension will result in an increase in the impermeable area by 32m². Whilst there would be a minor increase in surface water run-off as a result, the agent does not consider this to be appreciable. The agent has stated that surface run off from the extension would be fed into the existing drainage, with control valves fitted to slow down the rate of run off. The agent considers that given the scale of the footprint that there would be no offsite implications in terms of flood risk, for its design life and will not increase the occurrence of flooding elsewhere. The proposal itself would extend a family home and would not significantly increase the number of people in this area. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in this regard and not considered to have a material increase in flood risk. It should be noted that the Council's local planning policy CS35 does not apply to small-scale householder developments (para 11.20).

Impact on Trees

The Council's Tree Officer has verbally confirmed that there would be no adverse effect on the trees subject to conditions and informatives which would have been attached to the decision notice should the applications have otherwise been considered acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse Householder Planning and Listed Building Consent

Reasons for refusal:

171534/HOU

1. The proposed extension, due its scale, detailed design and appearance, would result in an overly large, incongruous, unsympathetic and dominant rear extension which reduces legibility, detrimental to the integrity and setting of the listed building, failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of this heritage asset. This would be contrary to Policies CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), Policy DM9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Informatives

1. This application was assessed on the basis of the following plans and documents:

Drawing No: Location Plan PL.1200

Received 4th September 2017

Design and Access Statement

Heritage Impact Assessment

Received 4th September 2017

Drawing No: Proposed Ground Floor Plan PL.1310 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed First Floor Plan PL.1311 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Roof Plan PL.1312 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 PL.1510 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 PL.1511 Rev A

Received 6th October 2017

Accompanying Statement

Received 6th October 2017

Revised Heritage Impact Assessment

Received 18th October 2017

2. Use of the Council's pre-application advice service can avoid the need to refuse planning permission. This scheme was not subject to pre-application planning advice. The Local Planning Authority has been positive and proactive in dealing with the application by advising of the issues and concerns with the application. However, the applicant chose not to withdraw the application, hence the issuing of these refusal notices within the agreed time period.

171541/LBC

1. The proposed development, due its scale, detailed design and appearance, would result in an overly large, incongruous, unsympathetic and dominant rear extension which reduces legibility, detrimental to the integrity and setting of the listed building, failing to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of this heritage asset. It would also result in the loss of historic fabric which contributes to the significance and special historic character of the Listed Building. The proposal would be contrary to Policy CS33

(Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Informatives

1. This application was assessed on the basis of the following plans and documents:

Drawing No: Location Plan PL.1200

Received 4th September 2017

Design and Access Statement

Heritage Impact Assessment

Received 4th September 2017

Drawing No: Proposed Ground Floor Plan PL.1310 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed First Floor Plan PL.1311 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Roof Plan PL.1312 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 PL.1510 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 PL.1511 Rev A

Received 6th October 2017

Accompanying Statement

Received 6th October 2017

Revised Heritage Impact Assessment

Received 18th October 2017

2. Use of the Council's pre-application advice service can avoid the need to refuse planning permission. This scheme was not subject to pre-application planning advice. The Local Planning Authority has been positive and proactive in dealing with the application by advising of the issues and concerns with the application. However, the applicant chose not to withdraw the application, hence the issuing of these refusal notices within the agreed time period.