



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 May 2022

by **William Cooper BA (Hons) MA CMLI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/N2535/W/21/3282132

Buildings Adjacent to 19 Brook Street, Hemswell, Gainsborough DN21 5UJ

- 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 & Mrs Morris against the decision of West Lindsey District Council.
 - The application Ref: 141128, dated 27 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing main building and its replacement with a 1.5 storey building to comprise a single family dwellinghouse (Use Class C3), new landscaping and ancillary works. Installation of solar panes to existing garage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the Council's decision, a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in July 2021. The parties have had opportunity to comment on the engagement of this new policy document in relation to the appeal, and so will not be disadvantaged by my consideration of it.
3. Whether the appeal building is a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) is a matter of dispute between the parties. On the basis of its inclusion in the Lincolnshire County Council Heritage Environment Record as the Former Blacksmiths Forge, its contribution to illustrating Hemswell village's former smithy complex, and recognition of the importance of its retention, as indicated by the application for and granting of 2004 planning permission¹ (the 2004 scheme) to retain it as part of a residential conversion, I consider the appeal building to be a NDHA.
4. As the proposal is in a conservation area (CA), I have had special regard to section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Hemswell CA, and preserve the Former Blacksmith's Forge NDHA.

¹ Planning Application Ref: M04/P/0684.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is located in the northern part of Hemswell village's CA. The CA is centred around the loop of Church Street, Maypole Street, Brook Street and Dawnhill Lane. The CA has a core stock of historic, typically limestone walled, pantile roofed dwellings, with the church at its heart. The historic building stock dates from the seventeenth to nineteenth century. Mixed in with this is a variety of more recent limestone or brick walled houses.
7. The appeal building is a former blacksmith's forge that dates from around the nineteenth century². It is built of roughly hewn and coursed stone, with red brick detailing to the door and window openings and one of the quoins.
8. Together with the neighbouring former blacksmith's house (FBH) at No 19 Brook Street, the appeal building is part of a former smithy complex. The FBH is a two storey building of coursed stone wall with a pantile roof. Also dating from around the early nineteenth century, the FBH was the residence of the blacksmith who worked the forge at the appeal building. The FBH is on the Schedule of Important Buildings within the Hemswell Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA).
9. The appeal building and the neighbouring FBH illustrate the village's former smithy complex. This complex was apparently in operation from the nineteenth century to around the mid twentieth century. The complex's location facing the eastern end of Brook Street, and as part of a cluster of historic buildings on the approach to the turn of the corner with Dawnhill Lane, contributes to its prominence in the CA.
10. After its cessation in operation as a forge, the appeal building is thought to have been reroofed. The appeal building's residential conversion element of the 2004 scheme has not been implemented.
11. Judging by various building surveys and technical opinion before me and what I saw during my site visit, the appeal building is in a state of some deterioration. There are gaps in its wall at its south-west corner and rear elevation, and in some interior walling. Some timber decay is apparent, and props are in place. Also, the extent to which the building's walls are plumb is open to question. Repairs for future retention of the appeal building may well need to include stabilisation measures, rebuilding of walling, replacement of decayed timbers, chimney brickwork, repointing, roof repair, rainwater goods and drainage work.
12. That said, the main forge structure of the appeal building is extant. Its compact doorways and windows contribute to its intimacy of scale and historic character. Together with these, the remaining fabric of its gallery, fireplace and interior wall compartments contribute to its architectural charisma and illustration of its former forge function. Furthermore, its subordinate scale and mass in relation to the FBH helps to illustrate the architectural hierarchy of the former smithy complex. Also, the appeal building is situated among a group of buildings on the north-eastern part of Brook Street that includes a cluster of attractive coursed stone cottages, dating from between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. This cluster is distinctive historic element of the street and CA.

² As indicated by Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record.

13. Given the above, the CA's significance, insofar as it relates to this appeal lies in the historic townscape that reflects Hemswell's village architecture and community from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. The appeal building has evidential, historical and communal value. Its special interest, insofar as it relates to this appeal derives from the legibility of its nineteenth century forge architecture, and its illustration of the village's former smithy complex. This contributes to the character and significance of the CA.
14. The removal of the former blacksmith's forge building would result in loss of its combination of historic form and fabric, including its charismatic coursed stone walling style, which is a distinctive characteristic of the host cluster of historic buildings towards the eastern end of Brook Street.
15. Furthermore, compared to the existing former forge building, the proposed new house would come close to doubling the depth of building, increase ridge height by around two fifths and increase building width. This substantial step up in building scale and mass at the appeal site would lead to a ridge height appearing similar to that of the neighbouring FBH. This would lose the modesty and intimacy of scale of the appeal building, its architectural subservience to the FBH, and the legibility of the smithy complex's historic building hierarchy. Also, in combination with the recent neighbouring dwelling to the west, the proposed house would result in a pair of newer houses which would draw the eye from older, historic buildings clustered along the north-eastern part of Brook Street.
16. Furthermore, the rooflights in the street-facing pitch of the new house, and the addition of solar panels to the street-facing roof pitch of the garage would intensify modernity within the streetscene.
17. Consequently, the proposal would noticeably reduce the historic authenticity and continuity of architectural scale, form and character at the appeal site. This would adversely tip the locality's delicate character balance from authentic historic character towards inauthenticity. As such, the proposal would erode the distinctive historic architectural charisma and authenticity of the north-eastern part of Brook Street on a main loop within the CA.
18. The loss of the nineteenth century forge building would result in substantial harm to the NDHA and erode the legibility of the village's former smithy complex. The erosion of Hemswell's historic village architecture would harm the character and appearance of the CA.
19. The identified harm arising from the proposal would be significant, relative to the site and the immediate surroundings of the proposal in the CA. However, the effect would be localised and therefore would constitute less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA as a whole. In such circumstances I therefore necessarily weigh the harm against the public benefits of the proposal.
20. The proposed development would contribute to local housing supply in the form of one three-bedroom dwelling, with associated socio-economic benefits to the area during and after construction. Solar panels on the garage roof would contribute towards sustainable power generation. The proposal would bring new life to an unoccupied site in the village, on which the lack of full

implementation of the 2004 scheme, and the deteriorated condition of the appeal building³, call into question the likelihood of its future conversion.

21. I appreciate the appellant's intention to safely rejuvenate the site and pay homage to the forge building, through the proposed building's design and harvesting of reclaimed materials. However, the public benefits are limited by the scale of proposed development. Moreover, they are tempered by the consideration that, even if rejuvenation of the appeal building through residential conversion were unlikely, it is not decisively demonstrated that the enlarged scale and mass of the proposed building, in comparison to the forge building which it would replace, is the minimum and most sympathetic possible scheme necessary to rejuvenate this site, with its heritage sensitivities.
22. I therefore find the public benefits and do not outweigh the great weight given to the conservation of the CA and the less than substantial harm to its significance which I have identified.
23. To conclude, the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA, including failing to preserve the NDHA. As such it would conflict with Policies LP17, LP25 and LP26 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. Together the policies seek to ensure that development is of appropriate design and appearance to conserve or enhance local character and the historic environment. The policies are consistent with the approach of Framework in respect of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, with great weight given to the asset's conservation.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

24. Bringing matters together, I have found that the proposal would harm the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 199 of the Framework establishes that when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. As set out above, I have determined that the public benefits of the proposal are insufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm that would be caused to the significance of the designated heritage asset. Accordingly, I confirm that overall, the benefits of the proposal are insufficient to outweigh the totality of harm which I have identified in relation to the main issue in this case.
25. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

William Cooper

INSPECTOR

³ As suggested by the combination of surveyor's opinions presented.