



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 April 2024

by J D Clark BA (Hons) DpTRP MCD DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/T4210/W/23/3332224

**The Coach House, Former Ainsworth Nursing Home, Knowsley Road,
Ainsworth, Bury BL2 5PT**

- 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 K J & V Stopforth against the decision of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 69616.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing building and erection of two detached dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs has been made by Mr & Mrs K J & V Stopforth against Bury Metropolitan Borough Council. That application is subject to a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. Since the appeal was submitted, the Council has adopted Places for Everyone¹ as part of the statutory Development Plan for the Borough. The main parties were given the opportunity to comment on the adopted plan and I have taken into account the comments received accordingly.
4. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2023 and is a material consideration in this appeal. Comments were invited from the main parties and responses received have been taken into account.
5. The appeal site is located in the Green Belt. Based on the information presented, the development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt because it would accord with paragraph 154 g) of the Framework. This position is agreed by the main parties and I have no justifiable reason to come to a different conclusion.
6. A Structural Survey has been submitted with the appeal which the Council point out was not part of the planning application and therefore not subject to consultation or assessment as part of its decision making process. Although the structural report did not form part of the planning application, it was submitted

¹ Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document for Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan 2022 to 2039, Adopted 21 March 2024.

as part of the appellants' grounds of appeal at the outset of the appeal procedure. The Council consulted the relevant parties about the appeal and so an opportunity was given for any comments to be made. The Council has commented on the survey and so I do not consider that any unfairness or harm to natural justice would occur by my taking the structural survey into account in my assessment of the appeal.

Main Issues

7. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on: -

- the character and appearance of the area, including its effect on non-designated heritage assets; and
- the living conditions of the occupiers of The Haven and The Wash House by reason of loss of privacy or outlook.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

8. The appeal site comprises part of the former Ainsworth Nursing Home complex, located just off Knowsley Road on the outskirts of Ainsworth. Together with a number of other structures on the wider complex, it was developed in the early 20th century as part of Ainsworth Hospital for the treatment of smallpox. When the nursing home use ceased, the site was sold as separate plots and a number of these former hospital buildings converted to residential use, including The Wash House. Other buildings within the complex include, The Haven, The Bungalow and another dwelling to the south west of the appeal site, not yet built but granted planning permission². At this time, the appeal building was given the name The Coach House.
9. The Council's draft list of non-designated heritage assets indicates that all the 'Former Isolation Hospital' buildings are included in the local listing. I have taken all the former surviving hospital buildings to be non-designated heritage assets, including The Coach House.
10. The Coach House was formerly an isolation ward, while other structures housed an administrative block; the male and female hospital wards; baths; a laundry and a mortuary. The submitted heritage statement outlines that the site was in operation as a hospital in 1976 and subsequent to smallpox being eradicated, it became a nursing home in 1986.
11. The significance of these buildings individually derives from their architectural interest and associations with a locally renown architect, Henry Lord. Significance comes from the former use and function of the wider hospital complex and evidences the evolution of health and social care as a pre-cursor to the later creation of the welfare state and the National Health Service. Some of the other buildings have more architectural interest and detailing than others which contribute greater aesthetic value. Significance also comes from the buildings' group value, being a remnant of former hospital structures, with functional and associative links. Consequently, the wider former hospital site forms the setting for the designated heritage assets and each surviving

² Planning Application Ref: 68661.

structure within this contributes to the significance of the designated heritage assets therein.

12. The Coach House is a rectangular single storey building, constructed of red engineering brick, a slate roof with terracotta ridge tiles, a feature entrance and emphasis on vertical fenestration. Compared to more striking former hospital buildings, such as Knowsley House, the Coach House is of a restrained design, unadorned and institutional aesthetic, of modest scale and simple in form. The submitted heritage statement describes the appeal building as being low in value historically, aesthetically and communally. However, the Council states that this type of former hospital building is rare and is the only one understood to have existed in the Borough and therefore of local significance.
13. Other buildings on the wider complex might be of greater aesthetic value, reflective of their former functional status within the hospital complex. Nevertheless, the Coach House is of significance as part of the wider group and distinct for its separate and functional appearance, consistent with its original purpose as an isolation ward. The Coach House also shares historic and associative value with the other designated heritage assets on the wider complex, and contributes to their significance. The former hospital complex has evidently evolved and changed over time, including some buildings being demolished and others linked together. Despite additions, removals and alterations, to this day the original plan form, character and former use is legible. Therefore, the character and appearance of the wider complex, is greatly informed by the interrelationship, architectural hierarchy and cohesive character of the surviving former hospital buildings.
14. The appeal scheme proposes the wholesale demolition of the Coach House. Consequently, the significance of this building would be lost in its totality. Furthermore, the demolition of the Coach House in the setting of other designated heritage assets on the site weaken what survives of a coherent former integrated hospital complex.
15. The proposal would replace the existing single building with two detached dwellings. The design of the proposed dwellings is intended to reflect some of the design characteristics mentioned by a previous Inspector, who dismissed an appeal for the demolition of the existing building and erection of two detached dwellings³ on the same site.
16. Of themselves, the proposed buildings would appear as two-storey houses that would be typical suburban residential properties, not dissimilar to that which can be found almost anywhere. Whilst it is possible to pick out some specific details such as brickwork and roofing materials or porches and chimneys, these specific details alone fail to reflect the identity of either the extant building, or the other former hospital buildings that characterise the wider site.
17. Moreover, the proposed dwellings would be large, the four bedroomed dwelling, identified as House 1 would especially appear substantially larger and more dominant than the smaller dwelling alongside it, The Wash House. The development would also compete with Knowsley House, which historically was a key building on the hospital site. Although the buildings have long ceased to function as a hospital, there is a clear hierarchy of buildings that remains today. The introduction of two large detached dwellings as proposed, would

³ Appeal Ref: APP/T4210/W/22/3298500.

erode that balance and undermine the integrity of the overall site. The scale, form, design and overall appearance of the proposed dwellings would be at odds with the character and appearance of the former hospital, they would not sit comfortably within the wider setting of the heritage asset and would do little to respect its relevance and significance.

18. Drawing all of the above together, I consider that the proposed development would harm the significance of The Coach House and the other former hospital buildings in the wider complex, as non-designated heritage assets. The proposal would therefore result in total loss of significance of The Coach House and indirectly affect the significance of the other non-designated heritages. Furthermore, the proposed dwellings would do little to reflect the historical narrative of the site but rather would be uncomfortably out of place and harm the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development would therefore conflict with UDP⁴ Policy EN1 which, amongst other things, seeks to protect, preserve and enhance the character and appearance and amenity of the Borough's built environment. Moreover, it would conflict with the aims of the Framework to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Living Conditions

19. The Haven is located to the south of proposed House 2 and the distance between the two falls below the separation standard normally required between habitable windows. These are set out in SPD 6⁵. Although this document relates to alterations and extensions to residential properties, the separation standards aimed to protect privacy and overbearing relationships between dwellings are applicable.
20. At first floor level, House 2 would incorporate three roof lights, two of which would be to bathrooms and the other to a bedroom. Although the roof light would provide the only window to the bedroom, this room would be modest in size and I see no particular harm in relation to the level of natural light that the roof light would provide. The distance between the window and the rear elevation and windows to habitable rooms at The Haven would be below the standard. The appellant suggests that this could be overcome by condition or amendment to the plan. Whilst it would not be appropriate to impose a condition requiring the plans to be amended, it would be reasonable to require detailed specifications of the window to be submitted which could specify the height of the window above the internal floor level of the bedroom, glazing and opening details. Furthermore, the window would be slightly off-set from The Haven and so I am satisfied that overlooking from this window could be minimised.
21. The Wash House lies to the west of proposed House 1 and although the proposed dwelling would be taller and larger than The Wash House, the distance between the two is sufficiently wide to ensure that it would not be unduly overbearing. As such, the living conditions of the occupiers of The Wash House would not be harmed due to an overbearing outlook.
22. Therefore, the proposal would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of The Haven or The Wash House by reason of loss of privacy or outlook. UDP

⁴ Bury Unitary Development Plan, Adopted Plan 1997 – Written Statement Adopted by Bury Metropolitan Borough Council 29 August 1997.

⁵ Supplementary Planning Document 6 – Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties, Adopted 17 March 2004 and updated 13 January 2010.

Policy H2/1 requires development to make a positive contribution to the form and quality of the surrounding area taking into account matters including the position and proximity of neighbouring properties. Although the proposal would conflict with the SPD with regard to the separation distance, this would not cause harm as I have stated and no conflict with Policy H2/1 would arise. Both neighbouring properties have raised other concerns but these are not matters that would justify withholding permission on the basis of the effect on living conditions.

Other Matters

23. The structural report notes that there has been movement and/or erosion in the brickwork below damp course level to the front elevations although the brickwork above damp course level is reasonably plumb and within acceptable tolerance. To rectify these problems the report recommends the brickwork below damp proof course level to be taken down to the foundation and re-built. It goes on to state that as it would be extremely difficult to replace and underpin the brickwork, the main wall to the left hand side of the entrance should be taken down and rebuilt on a new foundation. Likewise, part of the rear wall would require the same level of treatment. Other works are also recommended.
24. The appellant states that these works would impact on the viability and the feasibility of a conversion. However, no evidence has been submitted to support this. The report alone is not sufficiently compelling to overcome the harms I have identified.

Planning Balance

25. The Council originally indicated that it did not have a five year supply of housing land as required by the Framework. However, the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan has resulted in strategic housing sites, which along with the identified housing land supply within the urban area enable the Council to demonstrate a deliverable five year supply of housing land. Paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is therefore not engaged. Nonetheless, the proposed development would provide two additional dwellings that would contribute towards boosting the supply of housing and choice of homes available in the Borough. There would be economic benefits relative to the construction phase and as future occupiers feed into the local economy.
26. No concerns have been raised about the access or parking arrangement for the new dwellings and I note the appellants intention to prepare and submit a Construction Management Plan which could be secured through a condition. A section of impermeable access road would be removed and new hardstanding areas would be constructed with permeable surface material. The site would also be landscaped. I note that a sprinkler/misting system is proposed for each dwelling in order to address any concerns of the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service. I also note that the new build scheme would be capable of delivering long term gains in energy efficiency and sustainability. Furthermore, the proposal would involve the partial redevelopment of previously developed land.
27. However, these benefits together with the lack of harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of The Haven or The Wash House do not overcome the harm I

have found to the character and appearance of the area and the non-designated heritage assets.

Conclusion

28. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Consequently, for the reasons set out above, the appeal should be dismissed.

J D Clark

INSPECTOR