

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2016/0360
Valid 15/07/2016

HALES HALL OAKAMoor
ROAD
CHEADLE

RETROSPECTIVE LISTED
BUILDING CONSENT FOR
ERECTION OF STEEL
FRAMED, TIMBER CLAD
BUILDING TO HOUSE A
BIOMASS BOILER,
SUPPLYING HEATING TO
GRADE II* LISTED HALES
HALL

(LISTED BUILDING CONSENT -
ALTERATION)

MAIN ISSUES

- Heritage
- Design

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the approximate position of a concrete base which had formerly supported two lightweight panel-walled single garages. A copse of tall mature trees adjoins to the immediate west, a part of a significantly more extensive group until recent clearance work (see 2006 and 2011 air photos). Facing west away from the main front to Hales Hall the site is to the right (NW) by some 19m (from the north side elevation) and forward of the front elevation line of the main hall façade by some 15m. The proposal comes to within c.22m of a single storey forward projecting extension to the front NW corner of the hall. The site is more directly opposite the separately Listed (Grade II) Coach House to Hales Hall.

The forecourt area to the hall, reached via a c.200m drive from Oakamoor Road to the south, now comprises rolled gravel with lawns beyond, sloping away SW to land now occupied by part of the associated Hales Hall holiday camping and caravan site.

Historic England describes Hales Hall as a well-proportioned, finely detailed small country house built in 1712, with some late 19th century additions. It is Grade II* Listed and as of 2015 has been placed on the Heritage at Risk Register.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is a part retrospective application for the siting of a c.5.5m x c.7m timber walled, steel framed building to house a biomass boiler. The building would be 3.1m to the eaves and 5.1m in height to the ridge of a dual pitched roof. A 250mm diameter chimney to a height of 10.3m would project through the south roof slope. Following strong initial reservations about the proposal from Historic England and the LPA a detailed and bespoke landscaping scheme was submitted aiming to provide a historically authentic re-establishment of former wooded areas in the

immediate vicinity of the application site which would help mask the building's presence and impact on the settings of the Listed Buildings.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS6c Other Rural Areas Strategy
SS7 Churnet Valley Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
R1 Rural Diversification
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs 1 to 17

Sections 7 – Requiring Good Design; 12 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

1981 – change of use from outdoor activity centre to country club – approved
SMD/1987/0822 – renewal of temporary permission for use of land for storage of unoccupied caravans – approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 8th September 2016

Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

The Council unanimously supported the application; they are delighted that this building is now being looked after and the timber clad building does not detract from the special character of the Hall.

Environmental Health

Combustion processes can cause issues with particulate matter / NOx, and smoke/odour. The applicant has now completed the required assessment form and indicates that the boiler is unlikely to breach local air quality objectives, provided it is operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. This should be made a requirement by condition.

Historic England

No objection in principle to a sensitively located biomass boiler. Initial response was that the proposal would harm the setting of the Grade II* Listed Hales Hall. Locating ancillary structures to the front of the Hall should be avoided. This is especially the case given the utilitarian appearance of the proposed structure and the scale of the associated flue.

In response the applicant made a series of attempts to demonstrate that the proposal could be screened by landscape planting and finally, with the submission of a professionally designed scheme, Historic England has commented as follows: "From the additional information we note that the applicant proposes to use planting to screen views of the structure in order to reduce its visual impact. Clearly this is less than ideal. However, if this is a compromise that your authority is willing to accept in principle, it is essential that the plants are of a height, density and maturity in order to provide immediate screening." They recommend that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of the Council's specialist conservation advice.

Conservation Officer

Concurs with Historic England. This report and its recommendation has been compiled in consultation with the Conservation Officer.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Policy SS6c – Other Rural Areas – is to "provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the Countryside". The Policy lists a series of actions by which this will be achieved. Of actual or potential relevance to this proposal these actions include: 'allowing suitable development which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset in accordance with policy DC2'; 'giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape'; 'ensuring renewable energy schemes are of an appropriate scale, type and location'; 'encouraging measures which protect and enhance the biodiversity, geological resources and heritage of the District'; and 'supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS7'.

Policy R1 applies to "all development in the rural areas" and states that wherever possible development should be within suitable existing buildings appropriate for conversion. The policy sets out a series of balancing considerations for the assessment of development outwith the town and village development boundaries. The assessment is one of weighing harm against benefit including the extent to which the proposal may facilitate economic activity.

There is a duty on the Local Planning Authority to specifically consider the implications for the settings of the Listed Buildings and consultation with Historic England is a statutory requirement for a Grade II* Listed Building as is the case here in respect of the Hall. Implications for the Coach House also need to be considered. Policy DC2 is to resist development harmful to heritage; promote development which sustains, respects or enhances heritage and to prevent the loss of heritage assets.

Policy SS7 for the Churnet Valley Area, specifically identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration, is that “particular support will be given to existing and compatible new tourism attractions and facilities; and measures to remediate and restore buildings.” The Policy states that “Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage...” and “The consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximize opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features”.

Design

The building is utilitarian in form with horizontal lap-board timber panelling to the exterior, timber doors to the gable facing the Listed Coach House and plain grey tiles to the roof. A striking feature would be the 10m tall (from ground level) slender (250mm diameter) flue pipe finished in black projecting from the south facing roof slope. It is considered that the timber should be stained dark brown, the tiles should be Staffordshire blue clay with a sample submitted for approval and the doors should be subject of further details – all to be required by condition.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

It is to be noted that Hales Hall was added to Historic England's Buildings at Risk register in 2015 and that the applicant only became owner of the Hall that same year having been operating the adjoining camping and caravanning site since 2008. The applicant is separately engaged in a comprehensive programme of renovation and restoration of the Hall under LBC SMD/2016/0358. It is therefore significant that this application is part of the new owner's plans for a viable business future for the site. The boiler is to provide the heating to the hall.

A number of strands of support in principle for the development can be identified from the policies SS6c, R1 and SS7 as summarised above, in particular, supporting economic activity, rural diversification and tourism – especially in the Churnet Valley Masterplan Area. There should be further support in so far as the scheme is part of an overall effort which will bring restoration and a viable business use to buildings which are designated heritage assets and furthermore one of which is registered as being at risk due to neglect and deterioration under previous ownership over a prolonged period. This support notwithstanding the implications for the setting of the Listed Buildings are a key consideration. It is unfortunate that the owner / applicant commenced work before consent. Even without heritage considerations the

proposed building is not ideally situated in relation to the Hall and Coach House buildings as it occupies a prominent position to the front.

Paragraph 129 of the NPPF requires that LPAs identify and assess the particular significance of a heritage asset affected by development including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset. LPAs are to take the assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset in order to avoid or minimise conflict. Key to this application is the significance of Hales Hall as an early 18thC country house with strongly associated structured landscaping, especially trees framing the principal outlook of the Hall to the south west. The map series extracts submitted in the heritage appraisal accompanying the application show that over an extended period, at least since 1880, woodland copses stood close up to the Hall, especially to the NW, effectively severing the Hall from the area – perhaps of more operational service – to the front of the Coach House Building.

Paragraph 130 says that evidence of deliberate neglect or damage to a heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision; though the dilapidation of the Grade II Listed Hall leading to its placement on the Buildings at Risk Register in 2015 is not believed in this case in any way associated with this applicant as new owner since 2015.

Paragraph 131 says that LPAs should take account of, in essence, conservation benefits and achieving viable sustaining uses of heritage assets; contribution to community economic vitality; and contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Overall as part of a business endeavour based on providing tourism accommodation for visitors to the area the applicant's plans for the Hall and accompanying estate land and assets can be seen to contribute by degrees to all of the points of paragraph 131.

Paragraph 132 says that “great weight” should be given to heritage asset conservation and any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Where there is less than “substantial” harm this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including securing its optimum viable use.

In response to the initial comments of Historic England and the Council's Conservation Officer the applicant, advised also by the Case Officer and the Council's Trees and Woodlands Officer, commissioned a professionally designed landscape planting proposal. This takes its lead from the historical map evidence to re-establish the framing woodland copse and introduce high quality specimen planting with the aim to significantly mitigate the strong negative impacts identified with the proposal. A further gain is that the plans now propose a beech hedge to be established along the northerly boundary with Hales Hall Farm.

In conclusion based on Policy DC2 and section 12 of the NPPF the proposal is found harmful due to its prominent position relative to the Listed Buildings and, notwithstanding that this is considered less than substantial harm, great weight is given to the harm in the ‘planning balance’. Alongside this it is recognised that the proposal is part of the applicant's overall long-term business venture for the Hales Hall Estate bringing a series of positive benefits where previously there had been deteriorating circumstances. Whilst it is not clear that the biomass proposal is

necessarily essential to the scheme, the ability of the applicant to incorporate a specialised tree landscaping scheme which both restores planting known to have been present historically and which will mitigate the identified visual detriments of the scheme to the setting of the heritage assets, leads on balance to a recommendation of support. There being no other outstanding matters approval is recommended.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 16/01/2017

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Haywood, Ben

Operations Manager – Development Services