

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0576
Valid 31/08/2021

STONELOWE HALL LEEK
ROAD
LONGSDON

PROPOSED FREESTANDING
ORANGERY/GARDEN ROOM

(FULL - HOUSEHOLDER)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Green Belt
- Impact on Visual Amenity/Design
- Impact on the Heritage Asset
- Neighbour amenity

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Stonelowe Hall is a grade II listed building listed (20 November 1987). The property is now a dwelling. The property benefits from a large plot and is located in Longsdon. The property is on Green Belt land.

When the application was originally submitted it was unclear if the land to the rear of the property was considered to be garden area. The applicant's agent has provided information such as date stamped photos and sales particulars to show that the land has been used by the applicant as a garden for a minimum of 10 years. As such if an application for lawful development was submitted it would be considered that the land is garden associated with the main dwelling. Therefore, the development relates to the erection of an outbuilding in the rear garden of the dwelling.

PROPOSAL

Consent is sought for the erection of a free-standing garden room/orangery in the curtilage of the dwelling.

The building will be constructed with smooth ashlar hollington sandstone to garden pavilion bedded with lime mortar mix. The building will have hollington sandstone parapet wall and coping stones. The roof will be a Bauder intensive green roof style. The doors and frame to the front elevation will be double glazed metal/bronze.

A new retaining wall will be constructed with drystone sandstone.

For clarity this assessment relates to the amended plans submitted by the applicant's agent on the 02.11.2021. The previously submitted drawings were considered to be inappropriate in terms of its design.

Listed Building consent has been granted for the proposed development ref SMD/2021/0577.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan

SS1 Development Principles
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 13
Section 16

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2022/0577- Listed Building Consent for Proposed Freestanding Orangerie/Garden Room- Approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 12/10/2022
Neighbour consultation period ends:n/a
Press Advert:13/10/2022

Public Comments

No representations received within consultation period.

Town / Parish Comments

Longsdon PC have no objection

Conservation Officer (Faith Cleverdon)

No objection to the amended development. The development has been carefully sited and detailed to minimize its impact, the request for a garden room reflects a changing world in which new owners of ancient buildings need the flexibility to create a 21st century lifestyle both inside and outside, essential if such buildings are to have a long-term future away from the farming world in which they originated. It is also considered that it has been designed to have the smallest possible impact in

physical terms, its impact for the long-term viability of the house, like the addition of bathrooms and kitchen, should weigh in the balance and be considered a plus.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Policy SS10 is that these areas will provide only for development which as an essential need to be located in the countryside and that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the green belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

As such the principle of whether the development in this case is appropriate or not must be determined by reference to the Government's Green Belt policy.

Government policy is that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt (NPPF 149). However, NPPF paragraphs 149 and 150 set out specific exceptions by which certain forms of development can be considered as being not inappropriate in the Green Belt. One of these exceptions is at NPPF 149 (c) "the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building".

The proposal relates to the erection of an outbuilding that would be ancillary to the main house. In the light of the recent court case of *Warwick District Council v Secretary of State* (Eyre J, 12 August 2022) although the building is detached it is within close proximity of the main building and therefore it is considered an 'extension to the building'. As such the principle of the development is acceptable subject to an assessment of its compliance with subsection c.

Impact on Green Belt

There are no specific definitions within the NPPF framework or the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan in relation to what constitutes 'disproportionate' and 'inappropriate encroachment' however the generally accepted approach is for an assessment on the increased footprint and volume that the development would create.

Analysis shows that the proposed outbuilding would amount to a cubic volume increase of less than 20% on the original property in this instance. An examination of the planning history does not reveal any previous additions to the property since 1948 and the site visit also does not indicate any recent extensions. Accordingly, it is not considered that the proposed increase in cubic volume would not result in a disproportionate addition to the original building.

The development is to be located within the rear garden and is single storey and therefore the development will be contained within the rear garden of the property and as such is not considered be of detriment to the openness of the surrounding Green Belt.

Impact on Visual Amenity and Design

The proposed outbuilding will be located to the rear of the dwelling built into the garden. The property will have a green roof so that when viewed from the rear the building would not be readily visible from long and short distance viewed.

The outbuilding would comprise of a modest footprint and is set behind the dwelling. As such the proposal is considered to be read as a subservient addition clearly associated with the main dwelling when viewed from the front elevation.

The proposed development has been subject to changes to its design so that it is a more appropriate design due to the dwellings status as a listed building. With regards to the amended plans it is not considered that any of the works proposed would be harmful to the character of the host property or visual amenities of the area.

Impact on the heritage asset.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

As stated in the Heritage Statement 'Stonelowe Hall is among the finest and most substantial of North Staffordshire's early minor gentry houses'. Here the emphasis should be on the word 'minor' and comparison with garden buildings provided for the magnificent houses/palaces of the nobility, or the homes of wealthy industrialists are not relevant here.

Buildings in the Staffordshire Moorlands that are directly comparable to Stonelowe were built for either the local gentry (the Ashes, Harracles, Mosslee, Rudyard Hall, Sharpcliffe and Whitehough) or the steward of a series of manors (Horton Hall). Set in a pastoral area these were built for the largest and most prosperous of the local farmers, making the essential ingredient for a viable garden a stock-proof perimeter wall, and beyond this a generous selection of farm buildings. Conscious of status (their own and that expressed by their buildings) the quality of the walling varied: good quality well-finished work to the front or where visible from the main access roads, and with emphasis on the main entrance; simpler stonework to the rear and for parts of the garden that were out of the public eye. Divisions within this reflect a similar hierarchy.

Like Stonelowe, these houses have seen at least four centuries of life; none was built in a single episode and neither were their gardens. Independent structures within the gardens are relatively rare and added at widely differing dates: Whitehough had gazebos added in the 18th century; Sharpcliffe saw its gardens

lavishly terraced, and tennis courts and walled gardens added in the 19th or early 20th centuries; Horton Hall saw its vast roadside barn removed and replaced by a coach house and the addition of a (recently restored) revolving garden house in the 19th century, the gardens to the north remodelled in the 20th century, and a new-build dining extension set discretely into the bank behind its service wing in the 21st century. Harracles, given a classical brick façade at the start of the 18th-century, once had elaborate garden with numerous subdivisions to the rear and is the most likely to have had a formal garden in the sixteenth century, but the prominent buildings to survive are a small bakehouse immediately behind the service wing, and a series of massive barns. In their time such additions reflected new owners with specific lifestyle demands.

The earliest map to shed light on the use of the land immediately around Stonelowe Hall dates to 1816 when both front and rear gardens were already in their present form. The east wing of the house is of medieval date while the hall, parlour and cross-wing date to the sixteenth century. Probate documents show the seventeenth century owners to have been pastoral farmers. Given the scale of their house, and their designation as 'gentlemen' they were among the most successful in this part of North Staffordshire. The simple division between front and back gardens was a practical one, and allowed flexible use of the rear space which was instantly accessible from the cross-passage and thus from the kitchen quarters of the house. The presence of an orchard, and the relationship to the service areas suggest the most likely use for this area was as a kitchen garden. The proposed garden room is intended to occupy a similar position as this division and is intended to preserve its effect if not its substance.

The purpose of Listing is to ensure that Listed Buildings evolve under careful control, to allow continued use in a changing world which has higher expectations of comfort and cleanliness, a principle that also applies to their immediate curtilage. Here the land to the rear of the house has recently been dug away to improve drainage and since the rear garden slopes down towards the house new revetment walls and steps were required to secure the bank and give access to the main lawns – modifications covered by an earlier application.

While garden buildings are relatively rare in the comparable buildings it should also be realized that many of these have seen farmers struggling to cope with the upkeep of massive houses that are out of kilter with the income of the surrounding farm. The inevitable outcome is their sale to owners with alternative sources of income, the money to restore and maintain them, and expectations of a life-style unrelated to farming.

Here at Stonelowe the expectation includes extensive use of the garden. Where most owners with a house of this size would seek to add a conservatory, for this house that would be seriously damaging, and the present proposals represent a modest attempt at providing an alternative. The issues therefore are precedence, siting, scale and design.

Precedents

Both Whitehough and Horton Hall have permanent garden buildings, the former its gazebos, the latter its revolving garden house. Later houses like Ashenhurst had a

plethora of built features but are not directly comparable in character to the earlier houses which are solidly built vernacular buildings with little in the way of ornamentation.

Siting

The site has been carefully chosen to ensure views of the house remain clear and uncluttered. While it is at the expense of a wall known to have in place by 1816 the new building will fulfil the same function, that of dividing the two garden areas, a minor price to pay for considerable added amenity.

Scale

Given its position, set into a bank, partially screened by the higher sections of the garden wall, and the massive nature of the adjacent house its scale is relatively modest, keeping its visual impact on the house to a minimum.

Design

The current submission is for a plain building with rectangular openings, built of local stone to blend with that of the house, and metal work of a colour to blend with both old and new. No attempt has been made to create a pastiche, and as the house reads as a mixture of 17th, 18th and 19th century styles, a quiet statement from the 21st century is more appropriate.

Considering the above the proposed works are acceptable as the development is not considered to cause harm to the significance of the special architectural and historic interest and setting of the Listed Building.

Impact on neighbour amenity

The application property occupies an isolated position away from any immediate neighbours. As such the development is not considered to have a detrimental impact on neighbour amenity.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Having regard to the duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and other material planning considerations the proposal is considered acceptable, and it is recommended accordingly.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION :

That planning permission is granted subject to conditions

Case Officer: Rebecca Bowers

Recommendation Date: 08.12.2022

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council