
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 14 September 2015

by David Nicholson RIBA IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28 September 2015

Wesley House, Jesus Lane, Cambridge CB5 8BJ

- The appeals are made by Mr Christopher Pratt, Jesus College, against the decisions of Cambridge City Council.
 - In each appeal the development/works proposed are the erection of a single storey covered walkway link in West Court. Walkway will connect the entrance into the stairwell on the north elevation of the Rank Building, proposed in a separate application, with the existing entrance on the south façade of the Webb Building's north range.
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Appeal A: APP/Q0505/W/15/3032565

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The application Ref. 14/1508/FUL, dated 26 September 2014, was refused by notice dated 21 November 2014.
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Appeal B: APP/Q0505/Y/15/3032585

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The application Ref. 14/1509/LBC, dated 26 September 2014, was refused by notice dated 21 November 2014.
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Appeal C: APP/Q0505/W/15/3127881

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The application Ref. 15/0679/FUL, dated 9 April 2015, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2015.
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Appeal D: APP/Q0505/Y/15/3127882

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The application Ref. 15/0680/LBC, dated 9 April 2015, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2015.
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Decisions

- 1. The appeals are all dismissed.**

Main Issue

- 2. The main issue in each appeal is whether the proposals would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and its setting.**

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within the city's Central Conservation Area. The Cambridge Historic Core Appraisal (2006) describes Jesus Lane as an ancient lane with a wealth of historic buildings. Wesley House was purpose-built to the west of Jesus College as a non-conformist Methodist Theological College. Until recently it comprised the buildings around a courtyard known as West Court and adjoining Jesus Lane. On the north side of the Court, the Webb building was built between 1925 and 1930 and consists of three ranges around a courtyard in a typically collegiate arrangement. This building has its principle elevation onto the courtyard and is in a Neo-Tudor style of red brick with carved ashlar dressings under a Westmorland slate roof. It is listed at Grade II. The lengthy description sets out the reasons for listing including its lofty neo-Tudor ranges around three sides of a quadrangle, its masterful handling of high quality materials, the association with a gifted architect (Maurice Webb), its intactness and its group value. The fourth side along Jesus Lane is occupied by the 1970s Rank building and is specifically not listed. The eleven bay north range to the Webb building faces onto the courtyard with three gabled bays at the centre. The presence of the Rank building means that there is no visual relationship between the courtyard and the street.
4. Listed buildings are defined as designated heritage assets under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 132 of the NPPF requires great weight to be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. It goes on to set out a presumption against substantial harm. Where the level of harm would not reach this hurdle, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act [s16 and s66] requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
5. Until recently, West Court and its surrounding buildings were occupied by Wesley House but Jesus College has now acquired the whole site and will occupy the western two thirds while Wesley House will occupy the eastern third plus a recently permitted extension. This will provide Jesus College with space to expand. It means that the western two thirds of the Court will be surrounded by Jesus College and the eastern third by Wesley House and has given rise to the current proposals. I saw that the works are underway.
6. The appeal proposals are for permission and consent for two separate schemes, with the same description, both of which would divide West Court at ground floor level. The walkway would be constructed between the north and south sides of the Court. In both cases it would run perpendicular to the façade from a doorway just east of the three gabled bays on the Webb building to an opposite door in the south wing. This would connect a proposed student bar with an auditorium. In appeals A and B the walkway would have external seating on both sides and a wide metal clad roof with a broad overhang above the seating. In appeals C and D the walkway between the same points would be pared down to just a series of exposed timber posts and beams supporting a pitched glass roof with the aim of reducing the structure to a minimum and providing a significant degree of permeability.
7. From my assessment above, I find that the open courtyard and the symmetry of the north range are both important aspects of the significance of the listed

building under the NPPF and of its special interest under s16 and s66. In both schemes the proposed walkway would divide up the courtyard and interfere with the striking symmetry of the façade and its setting. It would therefore harm the special interest and significance of the listed building. The works would not result in any loss of fabric and would be reversible. I therefore find that the degree of harm would not amount to substantial and so I have weighed it against the public benefits of the scheme in accordance with NPPF 134.

8. The appellant has acknowledged that it could be considered that the partitioning of the Court would diminish the setting of the listed building but has argued that it would greatly enhance the sense of ownership, place, containment and enjoyment of the two respective sides of the Court. It has argued that for the Court to be used it must be a space which people want to use, that is safe and is not struggling to reconcile conflicting sets of values.
9. I can appreciate that the division would aid the institutional co-existence of the colleges and that security, administrative and social benefits would flow from the walkway both through a more direct connection between the main part of Jesus College and the auditorium, and the separation of its students from those at Wesley House. On the other hand, there are other routes around the Court and students are used to walking significant distances between lectures. While the security benefits are important, other measures could be put in place. The ability to separate students using a bar from others who avoid alcohol, and so a clash between the use of the bar and the ethos of the Methodist College is no doubt desirable but the two groups of students will be in close proximity to each other in any event. Finally, these problems are not inherent in the buildings or West Court but are as a result of the appellant's decision to sub-divide the buildings between the two colleges in this way. For all these reasons I find that, for both schemes, the harm to the listed building as a result of the sub-division of the courtyard and the intrusion into the symmetrical façade would outweigh the public benefits.
10. I have considered the argument that the works would enable the refurbishment of Wesley House and the Webb building, ensure continued usability of the listed building, and allow the building to continue to function. However, I saw that these works are already underway, and so not dependent on the walkway, and consequently their future would not appear to be in doubt. I acknowledge that the glass roof in the second scheme would have some degree of transparency but this would not eliminate the visual impact.
11. I therefore conclude that the proposals would harm the special interest and significance of the listed building and its setting and that the public benefits would not outweigh this harm. The schemes would therefore conflict with advice in section 12 of the NPPF, with relevant Cambridge Local Plan policies which are in broad conformity with this, and with the tests in the Statute.
12. For the reasons given above I conclude that all the appeals should fail.

David Nicholson

INSPECTOR