

Report to Planning Committee – 13th January 2020

Ref No: 3PL/2019/0780/LB

The Railway Station, Station Road, Attleborough

Demolition of the two small ancillary buildings, redevelopment of the existing car park to include new car park area to be laid out including new car parking bays, ticket machine and CCTV and lighting. Demolition of the existing boundary retaining wall and construction of new realigned wall, footway-cycleway and a new bus stop.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

Reason for committee consideration

The application is referred to Planning Committee at the request of a Ward Representative.

1 Key issues

Design and impact on the historic and architectural character of the Listed Building

2 Description of development

2.1 Listed Building Consent is sought for;

- the demolition of two small ancillary buildings;
- redevelopment of the existing car park area to be laid out including new car parking bays, ticket machine, CCTV and external lighting, and;
- demolition of existing boundary retaining wall and construction of new realigned wall, footway / cycleway and a new bus stop.

Access to the site is via the existing access off Station Road (B1077).

The application is submitted in addition to planning ref: 3PL/2019/0827/F, which seeks full planning permission for the proposed works.

3 Site and location

3.1 The proposed development is located north east of Station Road, Attleborough, on approximately 3,208 square metres of land, which is currently used as a car park for the railway station, but also partially covered by trees, shrubs and two out-buildings. It is within the settlement boundary for Attleborough and is surrounded by built development, including the railway station and line, which is directly to the south east of the site. Attleborough station is a Grade II Listed building and the land subject to the application, including the two out-buildings proposed for demolition fall within the station's curtilage.

4 EIA Required

No

5 Relevant site history

3PL/2018/0084/LB Permission 24-08-18

Proposed repair works to building. Externals: Roof repair, Lead replacement, Brick rendering, Replace windows to Single glazing, Replace missing chimney pot. Internals: Hack off all plasterwork to expose brickwork up to 1.0m from floor level and leave to dry out, Repair ceiling and joists repair.

3PL/2019/0827/F

Demolition of the two small ancillary buildings. Redevelopment of the existing car park to include new car park area to be laid out including new parking bays, ticket machine and CCTV and lighting. Demolition of existing boundary retaining wall and construction of new re aligned wall, footway/cycleway and new bus stop.

6 Policy considerations

- 6.1 The following policies of the Breckland Local Plan, including the Proposals Maps, have been taken into consideration in the determination of this application.

COM01 Design

ENV07 Designated Heritage Assets

ENV08 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

GEN02 Promoting High Quality Design

LBC Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – Section 66

NP Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan

The provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular Section 19, paragraphs 193 - 202 and National Planning Policy Guidance have also been taken into account, where appropriate OBLIGATIONS/CIL

7 Consultations

Attleborough Town Council:

Approve. Concerns raised over parking charges.

Historic Buildings Consultant:

The two structures proposed for demolition are curtilage listed as they are within the curtilage of the principal building and clearly predate the 1st of July 1948. The comment received from Historic England is noted although you will appreciate that they have worded their response to neither suggest objection nor support. It merely indicates that they defer to my comment.

I have inspected the buildings, externally, and in my opinion, the building to the south-west (the larger of the two) should be retained and restored. The building

to the east however, has been significantly altered since its primary construction and is in the worst overall condition. In all likelihood, an attempt to restore this building would result in a complete rebuild dictating a complete loss of any special interest. With some creative thinking, the restored building could easily be given a new adaptive reuse. Consequently, I am unable to support the current application.

Additional comment received 18 December 2019:

In my opinion, the additional information submitted on 16th December 2019 does demonstrate an appropriate response to Para. 195 of the NPPF and I can no longer sustain my previous objection to the proposals.

Historic England:

On the basis of the information available to date, Historic England do not wish to offer any comments. We would therefore suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation adviser, and other consultees, as relevant.

Railway Heritage Trust:

In support - this proposal would give considerable public benefit both by allowing more use of the train service, and by reducing on-street parking around the station. It has been suggested that the two buildings are listed, as they lie within the curtilage of the listed station building. We find this interpretation of the curtilage regulations quite astonishing, and, if it is maintained, would support an application to Historic England for an Enhanced Listing assessment of the station and buildings.

We take this position because:

- The two buildings are physically remote from the station building, being separated by the car park;
- When English Heritage (as was) recommended listing the station, it did make clear reference to other historic buildings in the area, such as the Goods Shed. However, it did not reference the two buildings that are the subject of this application. We thus consider it highly likely that English Heritage did not see these two buildings as being of historic merit;
- There is no evidence at all of the buildings having been associated with the passenger operations on the station. They were associated with the freight sidings to the north and west of them;
- The two buildings are considerably more modern than the station building itself. OS maps show that they did not exist until many years later. In the case of the building known as No 2, which the Railway Heritage Trust understands that Breckland Council is proposing be retained, the building is not shown on the 1883 OS map, so it is at least 38 years younger than the main buildings;
- There is no architectural commonality or link between the two buildings and the station building;

- Even if the curtilage were to be accepted as an argument, we would still support the demolition of both buildings;
- Neither building has any particular architectural or historic features that might justify its retention, and both are in very poor condition. Building No 2 has been heavily modified internally, and shows nothing of its original features;
- Nobody has suggested any form of sustainable use for the building if restored. Greater Anglia is concerned about its use for unsocial behaviour, which might worsen if the building were to be restored but left unused;
- The proposed retention of this building appears inconsistent with Breckland Councils previous position to demolish buildings on site. In particular the Council permitted the demolition of the eastern extension of the 1845 building, which clearly was in the curtilage of the listed building, as it helped to restore the building to its original state. Demolition of the two buildings would improve the original site interpretation, by the removal of some very ordinary buildings;
- Greater Anglia has stated that it considers that the retention of either building would invalidate the benefits of the car-parking scheme, and that it would redirect the investment money elsewhere. Accordingly, the development would not proceed, and the application would be withdrawn. There would thus be considerable public dis-benefit from the loss of the improved car park, and no heritage benefit, as Greater Anglia would not carry out any restoration of the building, which nobody has suggested might have a sustainable use.

H M Inspector of Railways Office of Rail Regulation:

No Comments Received

Representations:

A site notice was displayed on 22 July 2019 and twelve neighbours directly consulted. No letters of representation were received.

8 Assessment Notes

- 8.1 This application has been considered in conjunction with planning ref: 3PL/2019/0827/F.
- 8.2 The key issue for consideration is the design and impact of the proposal on the character and setting of the Grade II Listed Railway Station Building, having particular regard to the loss of two out-buildings on site, both of which are considered to be curtilage listed. Any decisions relating to listed buildings and their settings must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see in particular section 66) as well as satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019) and Policies GEN 02, COM 01 and ENV 07 of the Breckland Local Plan (adopted November 2019).

Design and impact on the character and setting of the Listed Building

- 8.3 Part 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 clearly states that any object or structure within the curtilage of the (principal) building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before the 1st of July 1948, shall be treated as part of the (principal) building. In this instance the principle building is the Railway Station, which was listed at Grade II, in September 2011.
- 8.4 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF (2019) 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.
- 8.5 Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (2019) 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. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF (2019) states that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:
- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
 - b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
 - c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
 - d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.
- 8.6 Policy ENV 07 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that the significance of designated Heritage Assets (including their settings), such as Listed Buildings, will be conserved, or wherever possible, enhanced. Great weight shall be given to their conservation. Proposals that may affect the significance of a designated heritage asset will be required to provide proportionate evidence to the assets importance, sufficient to identify its significance, including any contribution that its setting makes to enable any impact to be fully assessed, in accordance with the NPPF (2019). Where a proposed development will affect the character or setting of a Listed Building, particular regard will need to be given to the protection, conservation and potential enhancement of any features of historic or architectural interest; including within the curtilage of a Listed Building that predates 1 July 1948.
- 8.7 The proposal involves the following works; the demolition of two small ancillary buildings; redevelopment of the existing car park area to be laid out including new car parking bays, ticket machine, CCTV and external lighting, and; demolition of existing boundary retaining wall and construction of new realigned wall, footway/cycleway and a new bus stop.

- 8.8 Historic England were consulted as part of the application process and advised that they would not wish to offer any comments on the application. However, they did recommend that the Local Planning Authority obtain a view from the Council's specialist heritage adviser.
- 8.9 The Historic Buildings Officer advised that the two structures proposed for demolition are curtilage listed, in accordance with part 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Following an inspection of the two buildings, the Historic Buildings Officer advised that the building to the south west (the larger of the two) should be retained and restored. However, he advised that in respect of the building to the east, it has been significantly altered since its primary construction and is in the worst overall condition. In all likelihood, he considered that an attempt to restore this building would result in a complete rebuild dictating a complete loss of any special interest.
- 8.10 In response to the Historic Buildings Officer's comments regarding the proposed demolition of the two curtilage listed out-buildings, the applicant provided further information regarding the viability of retaining the larger building for use and addressing the criteria set out at paragraph 195 of the NNPOF, having regard to the conclusion from the Historic Buildings advisor at that the loss of the western building would be "substantial".
- 8.11 It concluded that the buildings were in a dilapidated state and the demolition of the buildings would allow for the construction of a modern car parking facility to serve the station as well as an enhanced bus stop facility.
- 8.12 It also pointed out that a report and advice received from the independent Railway Heritage Trust expressed astonishment that the buildings should be considered heritage assets. The applicants consider that they have demonstrated the buildings' asset life expiration and the level of investment required in their restoration, with no evidence of interest from local persons or organisations to take on the responsibilities for repair and ongoing maintenance. Should the retention of the buildings be recommended then Greater Anglia's investments of over £1million in the facilities at Attleborough will be removed and it may put at risk the separate aspirations to improve the bus stopping provisions which they understand would be unpopular with the people of Attleborough as they have received the Town Council's support of the proposal.
- 8.13 The 16th December 2019 submission also details the benefits of bringing the site forward for car parking and weighing that benefit against the loss of the buildings.
- 8.14 It is accepted that the growth associated with Attleborough will require the re-development of the facilities at Attleborough Station and that this can be seen to outweigh the loss of the two buildings.
- 8.15 In light of the above considerations relating to the justification for the loss of the buildings when assessed against paragraph 195 of the NPPF that the proposal, which includes the loss of two curtilage listed buildings, is acceptable.

8.16 In coming to that conclusion regard has been had to policies COM 01 and ENV 07 of the Breckland Local Plan as well as the requirements of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in particular Section 66.

9 Conclusion

9.1 It is considered that sufficient information has been submitted to justify the loss of the out-buildings on site which are curtilage listed. The proposal is considered to meet the test set out at paragraph 195 of the NPPF and Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990. The proposal also complies with Policies ENV 07 and COM 01(a) of the Local Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve

Conditions

Listed Building Consent - Time Limit (3 years)

1 The development must be begun not later than the expiration of THREE YEARS beginning with the date of this permission.

In accordance with submitted plans

2 The development must be carried out in strict accordance with the application form, and approved documents and drawings as set out in the table at the end of this notice.

Access to building

3 Prior to demolition of the buildings the developer shall provide a full photographic survey of the buildings to be demolished to be carried out before and during the course of works hereby approved. The type and manner of the survey to be provided shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development and shall be carried out in accordance with those details as approved.

Variation of approved plans

4 Any variation from the approved plans following commencement of the development, irrespective of the degree of variation, will constitute unauthorised development and may be liable to enforcement action. You or your agent or any person responsible for implementing this permission should inform the Development Control Section immediately of any proposed variation from the approved plans and ask to be advised to the best method to resolve the matter. Most proposals for variation to the approved plans will require the submission of a new application.