



Bath Heritage Watchdog

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APPLICATION NUMBER: 18/03727/FUL
ADDRESS: Kennet House, Sydney Road, Bath
PROPOSAL: Erection of a 4 Bed Dwelling
CASE OFFICER: Christine Moorfield
DATE: 26 August 2018
COMMENT: OBJECTION

Whilst in our comment on the previous application for this site (18/01842/FUL, which does not show under the Property History tab) we did not have an ‘in principle’ objection to the erection of a house on this plot. We have researched the Government guidelines since then and there now has to be serious consideration about whether any dwelling could be considered appropriate for this site. The Government definition of brownfield sites excludes “*Land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments, which, although it may feature paths, pavilions and other buildings, has not been previously developed*”, and the NPPF specifically excludes residential gardens as previously developed land or potential windfall sites. This application therefore is a “garden grabbing” proposal: the fact that an owner of the Kennet House property failed to sell on all of the gardens with the house does not make the land not sold any less of a garden, and one that characterises the neighbouring properties in the area at that. We certainly do not consider the plans as submitted to be suitable for such an important location.

Bath Heritage Watchdog recognises the attempt to make the proposed dwelling fit into the context of the surrounding buildings, however these are very special surroundings made up of key heritage assets and landscape setting. If an exception is to be made so that “garden grabbing” is considered to be acceptable in this location, then any design has to be of the highest quality in terms of design and materials and not cause harm to the setting of those designated assets nor have a detrimental impact on the character of Conservation Area or the streetscape.

Regrettably whilst recognising that this new application proposes a smaller property of a less grand design, we still feel that it would be harmful.

LOCATION

Our first concern is the proposed position of the house. Currently the Grade II* Cleveland House sits unobscured with an uninterrupted background of green vegetation when looking east. The symmetry of the three blind windows is an important feature of this view.

The proposed location of the new house, whilst not being shown to obscure Cleveland House (though angles can be deceiving), it certainly dominates and draws your eye away from it. It would still also hide the Grade II listed Kennet House, apart from a glimpse along the Kennet House driveway.

It is considered that the building is still too large for the plot, a result of the subdivision of the Kennet House ground, which has created an out of character plot for the area. We also question whether the orientation of the proposed property is also contributing to such harm.

DESIGN/MATERIALS

The approach with this application appears to be to ape Kennet House without the quirkiness and charm. Although the elevational drawings make it look relatively acceptable (possibly partly due to the style of drawing), the photomontage shows something more akin to a 1960s house. The shape is unbalanced and lacks finesse.

We have concern over the proposed material – fair faced Bath Stone. It is unclear as to whether this is actually Bath Stone ashlar because the more common use of ‘fair faced’ relates to Bath Stone faced blocks. Only ashlar would be acceptable in this location.

This new application would have been a good attempt to create a dwelling that fitted in with the character of the area, if the area itself was not so special consisting of distinctive individual buildings in their 'own space' landscape setting. We have tried to be constructive in our criticism, but cannot support the application.

The works, by virtue of the inferior materials and oddities in the design is considered to be detrimental to the special architectural and historic character and interest of the adjacent listed buildings and the conservation area contrary to S16 and S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 12 ‘Conserving & Enhancing the Historic Environment of the NPPF and Policies DW1, CP6, D1, and HE1 of the Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan and should be refused in its current format.

The Government guidance appears to reject any development on a garden plot, and revised drawings will not overcome that reason for refusal.