



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-304816-19

Development

Construction of an apartment extension to Carrig House and an increase in the height of the existing stairwell and elevator shaft by one floor to provide access to the proposed apartment. The proposed development consists of work to a Protected Structure.

Location

Carrig House, Westbourne Place, Ballyvoloon, Cobh, Co. Cork

Planning Authority

Cork County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

19/4984

Applicant(s)

David William Walker

Type of Application

Permission

Planning Authority Decision

Refuse Permission

Type of Appeal

First Party V. Refusal

Appellant(s)

David William Walker

Observer(s)

None

Date of Site Inspection

23rd September 2019

Inspector

Elaine Power

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site is located in the centre of Cobh at the junction of Westbourne Place and Spy Hill. Cobh is located on Great Island approx. 20km south east of Cork City.
- 1.2. The subject site is irregular in shape and has a stated area of 0.3ha. It currently comprises Carrig House which is a Protected Structure (RPS 10012002) and listed on the NIAH (Reg. No. 20828259). The area is also located within an Area of Architectural Conservation. The Municipal District Office for Cobh are currently accommodated within the Protected structure with associated car parking on the grounds. There is an existing gate lodge located along the western boundary of the site. The gate lodge is also a protected structure (RPS 10012001) and listed on the NIAH (Reg. No. 20828258).
- 1.3. Carrig House is built on a cliff. It is significantly elevated from Westbourne Place and is highly visible within the town and seascape. There are significant views of Cork Harbour from within the site. Due to the topography of Cobh there are limited views of the site from Spy Hill. The site boundary along Westbourne Place comprises a curved retaining stone wall with a grotto carved into the cliff. The boundary with Spy Hill comprises a retaining stone wall.
- 1.4. There is an existing vehicular access to the site from Westbourne Place.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. It is proposed to construct an apartment at second floor level, over the flat roof of the existing Carrig House which is protected structure. The proposed 3-bed apartment has a gross floor area of approx. 124sqm with a 40sqm balcony on the southern (front) elevation of the building.
- 2.2. The design of the extension is pastiche, with a rendered finish and moulding detail around the windows. The extension has a flat roof and would increase the height of the building by approx. 3.6m. A 1.4m high glazed balustrade is proposed around the boundary of the balcony.

2.3. The works also include extending the existing stairwell and lift shaft which are located to the rear (north) of the building, to provide access to the apartment. The apartment would be accessed and operated independently of the existing building.

2.4. Vehicular access to the site would be from the existing entrance on Westbourne Place.

2.5. ***Unsolicited Further Information lodged 23rd April 2019***

An exemption certificate under section 97 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) was submitted.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Permission was refused for the following reason: -

The Planning Authority is not satisfied on the basis of the information / design proposal provided that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of Carrig House, a protected structure and the proposal would be contrary to objective HE-23 and HE 27: of Cobh Town Plan 2013. The proposed development to 'Carrig House' which is included in the Record of Protected Structures and located within an Architectural Conservation Area, by reason of its poor quality design, scale, mass and bulk would be out of character with its surroundings, would seriously detract from the architectural character, setting and seascape of Cobh Town. The proposed development would therefore, materially and adversely affect the character of Carrig House, a protected structure, would seriously injure the visual amenities of the Architectural Conservation Area, which is contrary to Planning Objectives HE 22, 23, 25, 27, 28 and 29 of Cobh Town Development Plan, The proposed development is therefore not considered to be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The reports by the Area Planner and Senior Planner raised concerns regarding the development and recommended that permission be refused for the reason noted above.

3.2.2. **Other Technical Reports**

Area Engineer: No objection subject to conditions

Liaison Officer: No comments

Conservation Officer: Raised serious concerns regarding the proposal and recommended that permission be refused.

3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

An Taisce: The proposed development would have an adverse impact on the character of the protected structure and would be visually dominant.

3.4. **Third Party Observations**

Cllr. Cathal Rasmussen considered that the proposed development would contravene the Development Plan, would be out of character with the area and would have a negative impact on the protected structure.

4.0 **Planning History**

Reg. Ref. 18/4046: Permission was refused in 2018 for the construction of an apartment extension to Carrig House and an increase in the height of the existing stairwell and elevator shaft by one floor to provide access to the proposed apartment. The proposed extension was a contemporary design. The reason for refusal related to the negative impact on the Protected Structure and the Architectural Conservation Area.

PL53. 234074 / Reg. Ref 09/52003: Permission was refused in 2010 for the construction of a medical centre, pharmacy, optician and café with associated car parking on the subject site (to the west of Carrig House). The reasons for refusal

related to the negative impact on the Protected Structure and Architectural Conservation Area and an under provision of car parking spaces.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Cobh Town Development Plan, 2013

5.2. The subject site is located within the boundary of Cobh Town. The relevant policies of the plan are noted below:

HE 22: *When considering development proposals for alterations and / or extensions to a protected structure or within the curtilage attendant grounds of a protected structure, the planning authority shall ensure that there is no loss of damage to the elements which contribute to the special character of the structure or its curtilage / attendant grounds.*

HE 23: *It is an objective to ensure development proposals are appropriate in terms of architectural design, treatment, character, scale and form to the existing protected structure. Development proposals shall be accompanied by appropriate documentation compiled by experienced conservation consultants.*

HE 25: *It is an objective of the Plan to ensure a high quality architectural design of all new developments relating to or which may impact on buildings listing on the Record of Protected Structures.*

HE 27: *It is an objective of the Plan to conserve and enhance the special character of the Architectural Conservation Areas included in this plan. The special character of an area includes its traditional building stock, material finishes, spaces, streetscape, street and plot layout, landscape, setting, public spaces and important aspects and views.*

HE 28: *It is an objective of the Plan to ensure that all new development is located within or adjacent to designated Architectural Conservation Areas will respect the established historical and architectural character of the area and will contribute positively to the existing built environment in terms of design, scale, setting and material specifications. This will be achieved by promoting a contemporary design of*

high architectural quality within Architectural Conservation Areas. The special character of Architectural Conservation Areas will be maintained through the protection of structures from demolition, non-sympathetic alterations and the securing of appropriate in-fill developments.

HE 29: *It is an objective of the Plan to protect all buildings, structures, and groups of structures, sites, landscapes and all features that are considered to be intrinsic elements to the special character of Architectural Conservation Areas. This will be achieved by promoting the sensitive and appropriate reuse and rehabilitation of buildings and sites located within Architectural Conservation Areas and by prohibiting alterations, development or demolition of structures and features that contribute to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area or any relevant protected structure or monument included in the Record of Monuments and Places.*

Policies HE -13, HE 14, HE 17 which relate to Landscape, Seascape, Views and Visual Amenity and Policy HE 20 which relates to Protected Structures are also considered relevant.

5.3. Cork County Development Plan, 2014

The relevant policies of the Cork County Development Plan are set out below.

- HOU 3-2: Urban Design
- HE 4-1: Record of Protected Structures
- HE 4-2: Protection of Structures on the NIAH
- HE 4-4: Area of Special Planning Control
- HE 4-5: Architectural Conservation Areas
- HE 5-1: Cultural Heritage
- ZU 2-1: Development and Land Use Zoning
- ZU 2-2: Development Boundaries
- ZU 3-2: Appropriate Uses in Residential Areas

5.4. National Guidance

Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2011

5.5. Natural Heritage Designations

There are no designated areas in the vicinity of the site.

5.6. EIA Screening

Having regard to the limited nature and scale of the proposed development and the absence of any connectivity to any sensitive location, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded. An EIA - Preliminary Examination form has been completed and a screening determination is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

A first party appeal against the Planning Authority's decision to refuse permission has been submitted. The submission addresses the reason for refusal and is summarised below: -

- The development is in accordance with local and national policy.
- A detailed history of the protected structure has been set out. The original building was constructed in the mid 1800's. A two-storey extension was constructed the 1930's. The apartment would be placed on top of the extension and not the original building.
- Over the past 16 years the applicant has carried out significant repair work to the protected structure. To provide maintenance and security for the building it is intended that the applicant would reside in the apartment. Details of a protected structure, St. Kevin's Hospital, which was vandalised in 2017 has been provided by the applicant.
- To protect historic buildings extensions and renovations are necessary. Details of protected structures in Cork that have been granted permission for contemporary extension have been included. In this regard, Belvelly Castle,

Great Island; Navigation House, Albert Quay; and Dunnes Stores building, Patrick Street.

- Aerial views of Carrig House have been submitted. The proposed development would not have a negative visual impact and can not be seen from Spike Island.
- Following a refusal of planning permission for a contemporary designed extension, the current design approach is to harmonise with the existing building. There have been extensive consultation with the Planning Authority regarding an appropriate design solution for an extension to Carrig House. The applicant was never requested by the Planning Authority to submit a visual impact statement. The applicant considers that the design and layout of the development is appropriate.

Drawings and photographs have been included with the appeal submission.

6.2. **Planning Authority Response**

None

7.0 **Assessment**

7.1. The main issues in this appeal relate to the impact of the development on the protected structure and Architectural Conservation Area. Appropriate Assessment requirements are also considered. I am satisfied that no other substantial planning issues arise.

7.2. ***Built Heritage***

7.2.1. The Planning Authority refused permission on the basis that the poor-quality design, scale, mass and bulk of the development would seriously detract from the character of Carrig House which is a protected structure, the Architectural Conservation Area and the visual amenities of Cobh.

7.2.2. The development comprises the construction of a second-floor apartment, over the flat roof of the existing Carrig House (protected structure). The proposed 3-bed

apartment has a gross floor area of approx. 124sqm with a 40sqm balcony on the southern (front) elevation. The design is pastiche with a rendered finish and moulding detail around the windows. It has a flat roof and would increase the height of the building by approx. 3.6m. The works also include raising the height of the existing stairwell and lift shaft, located to the rear (north) of the building, to provide access to the apartment.

- 7.2.3. It is noted that the applicant proposes to reside in the proposed apartment to allow for 24-hour on-site security and that the existing building is in use by Cork County Council during regular office hours. The Architectural Heritage Protection guidelines acknowledges that the best method of conserving a historic building is to keep it in active use and that a degree of compromise is required to accommodate modern living.
- 7.2.4. Carrig House is a three-bay two-storey, classically proportioned, former house, built in approx. 1860. It is a landmark building and highly visible within Cobh. A significant number of buildings along Westbourne Place are protected structures and the site is located within an Architectural Conservation Area. The applicant stated that the design and layout is the result of consultation with the Planning Authority and that the design approach mimics the existing building. It is noted that permission was refused in 2018 for a similar type development, with a contemporary design approach (Reg. Ref. 18/4046). The Planning Authorities Conservation Officer raised serious concerns regarding proposed development and considered that the development would negatively alter the character of the protected structure and its setting and would have a negative impact on the character of the Architectural Conservation and recommended that permission be refused.
- 7.2.5. The applicant has stated that the proposed development would be placed on top of a 2-storey 1930's extension and is not part of the original house. The Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines note that additions to structures contribute to the historical development of a building, and as such should be respected. It is also noted that the entire building and its curtilage are protected, and that site is also located within an Architectural Conservation Area.

7.2.6. Having regard to the siting of the proposed development, at the second-floor level of a highly prominent protected structure, it is my opinion that the scale and bulk of the extension would result in an inappropriate development that would damage the special interest of the protected structure and the Architectural Conservation Area and would be visually obtrusive when viewed from Cobh and the seascape. It is considered that the development would contravene policies of both Cobh Town Development Plan and Cork County Development Plan, which aim to conserve and enhance the special character of protected structures and Architectural Conservation, and that permission should be refused on this basis.

7.3. ***Appropriate Assessment***

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development within a serviced urban area and the distance from the nearest European site, no Appropriate Assessment issues arise, and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, on a European site

8.0 **Recommendation**

It is recommended that permission be refused for the reasons stated in the attached schedule.

9.0 **Reasons and Considerations**

1. Having regard to the protected structure status of Carrig House, the significantly elevated nature of the site and its location within an Architectural Conservation Area, it is considered that the proposed development, by reason of its overall design, scale, bulk and massing, would be out of character with its surroundings and the setting of Carrig House and would seriously detract from the Architectural Conservation Area. The proposed development would, therefore, materially and adversely affect the character of this Protected Structure, would be contrary to Policy Objectives of the Cobh Town Development Plan 2013 and of the Cork County Development Plan, 2014, would seriously injure the visual

amenities of Cobh and would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Elaine Power

Planning Inspector

10th October 2019