
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 November 2016

by J Flack BA Solicitor

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

Decision date: 9 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2810/Y/16/3152569

7 Drayson Lane, Crick, Northamptonshire NN6 7SR

- 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 appeal is made by Mr Lee Needham against the decision of Daventry District Council.
 - The application Ref DA/2016/0177, dated 2 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 May 2016.
 - The works proposed are single storey flat roofed side extension with glazed link.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building known as 7 Drayson Lane (listed as Greenhill Farmhouse).

Reasons

3. The listed building (the house) dates from the C18 and fronts directly onto Drayson Lane. On one side of the house is a vehicular access. On the other side, where the proposed extension would be constructed, the street boundary consists of a high stone wall surmounted by an evergreen hedge. The house is constructed of stone, although some parts have been pebbledashed or rendered. Now occupied as a dwelling, it was formerly a farmhouse, and to my mind it is a valuable example of local vernacular architecture. This status is defined not only by its stone construction but also by the appealing simplicity of its rectangular form and steeply pitched roof, together with the informally disposed and modestly sized window and door openings. These qualities provide the house with a high degree of coherence and integrity in its appearance, but they have a recessive and unassuming nature which renders the house sensitive to alteration or additions.
4. The proposed extension would have a very low height compared to the tall side elevation to which it would be adjacent, attached by a wholly glazed link. However, it would not be a merely minor addition, as it would have quite a substantial footprint in the context of the house. Moreover, whilst the street facing elevation of the extension would be set back behind that of the house, the rear elevations would be in line, and although the glazed link would be recessed, it would be very short. These factors, together with the extensive use

of stone on the extension's elevations, would result in the extension having a very minor degree of visual separation from the house and also limit its ability to establish a separate and distinctive personality. The extension would instead tend to invite comparison with the house, and in that context its large glazed door and window openings, and its flat roof, would be obviously incongruous and somewhat jarring features.

5. The flat roof's planted surface would serve to limit the extension's visual impact, but only in views from above. I also acknowledge that the flat roof design would result in the extension not being visible from the street if the present hedge were to be maintained. However, this does not count very substantially in the proposal's favour given that listed buildings are designated in the light of their inherent qualities, not the extent to which these can be appreciated in public views. Viewed from ground level within the house's curtilage, the substantial depth and overhang of the flat roof would be prominent and give the extension an unacceptably top heavy and awkward appearance.
6. Access to the extension would be provided by lowering a window aperture the end wall of the house to ground level. The appellant suggests that the window aperture is not original, but provides no analysis to support this. In any case, there is no suggestion that the wall beneath it is not original. The proposal would thus result in some loss of historic fabric, albeit modest. The large aperture created would also be at odds with the character of the house, and to a degree cause the extension and the present kitchen to read as a single open plan space, contrasting with the cellular nature of the present ground floor plan. These matters add to my concerns.
7. The appellant draws attention to previous works which the Council has consented, but these are not comparable with the appeal proposal given that they involved the conversion of an existing outbuilding within the house's curtilage to form ancillary residential accommodation rather than the provision of a new or extended building. My attention is also drawn to a consented single storey extension at 6 Watford Road. However, whilst this is also a listed building, the circumstances and qualities of every listed building are unique, and from the information provided to me it appears that the design and character of both the host listed building and the consented extension fall far short of being so similar to the present house and the appeal proposal as to set a precedent. I thus do not consider that these consented works count materially in favour of the appeal proposal.
8. I acknowledge that the proposed extension is quite modest in scale, and also that a variety of approaches to the design of an extension to a listed building may have potential to be successful. However, for the reasons I have given, I consider that the design of the appeal proposal and its interaction with the house would not be satisfactory. I thus conclude that the proposed works would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, the desirability of which is a matter to which I am required to have special regard by section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
9. Reference is made in the documents before me to the PPS 5 Practice Guide, but this has been withdrawn by the Government. National policy is now provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). For the purposes of the Framework, the listed building is a designated heritage asset, and within

its overall context I consider that the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 134 of the Framework requires that such harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. However that exercise is to be undertaken in the context of the statutory duty mentioned above, which requires that considerable importance and weight are to be given to the desirability of preserving the listed building. This is reinforced by paragraph 132 of the Framework, which requires that great weight be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.

10. The proposed extension would replace an oil tank as part of a new and more energy efficient heating system, but there is no suggestion that this could only be effected in conjunction with the appeal proposal. The appellant's intention is to relocate the current kitchen to the extension. However, whilst the appellant refers to issues of damp and condensation arising from the current kitchen, there is no evidence that these are causing material problems to the fabric of the house. The additional accommodation provided by the extension would clearly be beneficial to the appellant, but I regard this as a private rather than public benefit given the absence of evidence that the current accommodation is deficient to an extent likely to threaten the viability of the house as a dwelling.
11. I conclude that the public benefits of the proposal are very limited and do not outweigh the material harm which would be caused to the designated heritage asset. It follows that the proposal would be contrary to the historic environment policies of the Framework. Moreover, whilst the appeal arises from a refusal of listed building consent rather than planning permission, policies of the development plan are material to my assessment, and in that context I note that there would be conflict with Policy BN5 of the Joint Core Strategy¹ and saved Policy GN2 of the Local Plan², whose objectives include the protection of heritage assets.
12. I have taken into account all other matters raised in the evidence before me, including the support of the Parish Council. However, nothing arises which disturbs my conclusions on the main issue. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

J Flack

INSPECTOR

¹ West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1), December 2014

² Daventry District Local Plan, September 2007