

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 February 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DiP TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 02 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/F1610/D/16/3166338

Rose Cottage, Icomb, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL54 1JD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Rupert Wesson against the decision of Cotswold District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/02566/FUL, dated 7 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is a first floor rear extension, a two storey side extension, and a porch to the side.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property, and whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Icomb Conservation Area; ii) the proposal's effect on the setting of nearby listed buildings; and iii) if the Conservation Area or the setting of listed buildings would be harmed, whether there are public benefits that would justify allowing the appeal.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The Icomb Conservation Area ('the CA') takes in most of the village, including Rose Cottage. The buildings here are overwhelmingly finished with stone and are informally sited at a variable distance from the highway and from each other. They range in size, with modest cottages interspersed with houses of grander proportions, together with traditional farm buildings. Given that variety and juxtaposition there are many views from the highway of buildings beyond and behind those sited closer to the road.
4. Notwithstanding previous extensions, Rose Cottage remains a fairly small, stone property, which the Council states dates from the early/mid nineteenth century. It sits in a large plot, and has a broadly 'T' shaped plan, with a modestly-proportioned symmetrical frontage, a rear wing with a first floor contained within its set-down ridge, and single storey adjuncts. Its windows are typically square or have a vertical emphasis.

5. Although I understand that it has been de-listed, given its age, design, modest proportions, materials, and simple vernacular style it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. I agree with the Council that it is a non-designated heritage asset as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework').
6. Excluding a modest single storey lean-to, the length of Rose Cottage's rear wing is broadly similar to the width of its side-facing gables; and its ridge line is shorter than the ridge on its frontage. As a result of this proposal the property would have two rear wings whose length would be significantly greater than the width of the cottage's gables; and whose ridge lines would exceed the length of the ridge on the cottage's frontage. One of those wings, which would contain a further gable facing to the side, would project beyond the existing property's side wall.
7. I appreciate that the extensions would be constructed with local stone and second hand slate tiles, and that they have been designed with ridge heights lower than the cottage's main ridge. The appellant states that they accord with the Council's Design Guide. However, for the reasons above, cumulatively, the extensions would dominate the modest proportions of the cottage. The complexity as a result of the plan form, and the two additional gables, would be at odds with the original building's simple design. Furthermore, the horizontal windows proposed in the northern elevation would be at odds with the cottage's existing fenestration and would appear incongruous. Consequently, the significance of this heritage asset would be harmed.
8. Although the extensions would be located to the rear, the resultant depth, bulk and complexity of the building would be apparent from the road looking through the gap between Rose Cottage's flank wall and the tall hedgerow to the north.
9. The Council expresses concerns regarding some other design features. However, the rooflight would be fairly discretely sited with only glimpses of it from the road to the south, and I noted a few other such features in the CA; the proposed porch canopy would have a relatively simple design; and it is not clear where the proposed 'deep dormer window' is that it refers to.
10. Nevertheless, for the above reasons the scheme would harm the simple form, character and appearance of this modestly-proportioned, vernacular cottage. In harming this property it would harm the CA as a whole; and having paid special attention to the statutory duty, I conclude that the scheme would neither preserve nor enhance its character or appearance. The proposal would therefore not accord with that requirement in policy 15 of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2001-2011 (2006) ('LP'), including its statement that the scale, form, proportions and design of development should be in keeping with the special character of conservation areas. There would also be a conflict with LP policy 42's stance that development shall respect the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of the Cotswold District with regard to matters such as proportions and simplicity.

The setting of nearby listed buildings

11. In considering whether to grant permission for development there is a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or

their setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. In its reason for refusal the Council states that the setting of nearby listed buildings would be harmed, and refers to the buildings at Home Farm and Lodge Barn.

12. Lodge Barn is a large eighteenth century stone structure located on the opposite side of the road, a little way to the north. Given the distance of this scheme to that listed building, its rearward siting, and the intervening presence of boundary walls and landscape features, I am satisfied that Lodge Barn's setting would not be harmed.
13. The listed buildings at Home Farm include the Farmhouse itself and a separately listed barn to the north-west. The barn is a large structure of rectilinear plan form, whose largely plain northern wall forms the boundary with the appeal site. Given the difference in ground levels the barn's eaves and ridge are significantly higher than those features on Rose Cottage.
14. As a result of this proposal Rose Cottage would be extended to the rear and to the side, and views from the road of Home Farm Barn's plain, stone wall on its northern elevation would be largely obscured behind the mass of the scheme's complex side elevation. Part of the character of the CA arises from the informal lay out and juxtaposition of buildings of differing scale and historic function. However, in my view, this scheme's complexity would jar with the simplicity of Home Farm Barn, and views of that listed building from the road would be largely obscured. Consequently, applying the statutory duty, I conclude that the setting of Home Farm Barn would be harmed.

Public benefits and planning balance

15. The Framework defines designated heritage assets as including listed buildings and conservation areas. In accordance with its paragraph 132 I have given great weight to their conservation here.
16. The proposal would provide additional living space for the occupants of Rose Cottage, and would enable them to work from home more, thus reducing the need to commute. However, I am not persuaded that this scheme is the only way in which that objective could be met. Additionally, there may be a limited public benefit if the scheme were to make the property more attractive to local families who wish to reside in the village and contribute more to it than holiday-makers; although from the evidence before me it is not clear that that would necessarily be the case. Furthermore, although LP policy 15 states that development *may* be permitted if it can help an area remain alive and prosperous, that is only if its character and appearance would not be compromised.
17. Consequently, whilst the harm caused to the CA, and to the setting of Home Farm Barn, would be less than substantial, the limited public benefits arising would be significantly outweighed by the harm that I have found.

Other matters

18. Whilst the appellant refers briefly to a development that has been permitted in Broadwell that he maintains has a greater impact on the streetscene within a conservation area than here, I do not have details of that, or any other scheme.

In any event, such examples elsewhere would not change my conclusion regarding the harm that this proposal would cause in this village.

Conclusion

19. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host property. Furthermore, it would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Icomb Conservation Area, and would harm the setting of Home Farm Barn. I have given great weight to the harm that would be caused to those designated heritage assets. Although the harm caused would be less than substantial, the public benefits arising from the scheme would be limited, and do not outweigh the harm that I have found.

20. Notwithstanding the absence of any third party objections, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with policies in the development plan and the Framework. Consequently, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR