
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 4 December 2017

by Kenneth Stone BSc Hons DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 13th December 2017

Appeal A: APP/V2825/W/17/3181256

2 Hill Cottage, Willow Lane, Great Houghton, Northampton NN4 7AW

- 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 Ben Stone against the decision of Northampton Borough Council.
 - The application Ref N/2016/1026, dated 25 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as 'i proposed removal of existing roof to side addition and new roof; ii proposed two storey stone addition to replace conservatory; and iii minor internal alterations'.
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Appeal B: APP/V2825/Y/17/3181261

2 Hill Cottage, Willow Lane, Great Houghton, Northampton NN4 7AW

- 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 Ben Stone against the decision of Northampton Borough Council.
 - The application Ref N/2016/1025, dated 25 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 April 2017.
 - The works proposed are described as "i proposed removal of existing roof to side addition and new roof; ii proposed two storey stone addition to replace conservatory; and iii minor internal alterations'.
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Decisions

Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are; firstly, in relation to both appeals, whether the proposals would preserve the Grade II listed building known as No.2 (Hill Cottage) Willow Lane or any features of special architectural interest that it possesses; and secondly, in relation to appeal A only, whether the proposed development would preserve the Great Houghton Conservation Area.

Reasons

Listed Building

4. The property the subject of these appeals is a grade II listed cottage dating from the late 17 or early 18 century. The list description includes identification of flanking chimneys on stone coped gable ends on kneelers; these features still exist and contribute to the special and architectural historic interest of the property, along with the principal limestone walls, as a vernacular two storey cottage with rooms in the attic. The listing refers to the roof covering as slate however presently it is thatched and I have been provided with no evidence of when this change was undertaken or whether it restored an original feature.
5. The building has been extended and there is presently a two storey addition to the west side with limestone rubble on the ground floor and rendered above again I have been provided no evidence of if these were phased works or when they were undertaken. That extension is topped with a slate roof. A further small conservatory has been added to the side of the side extension.
6. The original two storey high pitched roof cottage is readily discernible in form shape and materials; the fenestration is simple and uniform. The later additions are identifiable by materials, reduction in height and form but distract from the original simple vernacular cottage.
7. The proposals in the context of this appeal would result in the raising of the ridge of the existing two storey extension increasing the pitch of its roof, the demolition of the existing conservatory and the addition of a further extension to the west of the property. The new extension would be set at a lower ground level and accommodate a storey and a half with a room in the attic of the pitched slate roof. The extension would be clad in materials to match the original stone walls of the main cottage.
8. Internally some re-arrangement would occur resulting in the introduction of a stud partition and internal door to create a study and remove the existing kitchen, and the removal of 400mm of wall to facilitate access to a new kitchen in the ground floor of the proposed extension. A new stud partition wall at first floor level would separate bed room 2 and create an access corridor through to the new bed room 4, in the upper floor of the new extension. This would also require penetrating the external wall to create the new door way.
9. Much of the internal works are limited in effect and are limited to the existing extension of the property rather than the original historic cottage. There is limited alteration to the floor plan and in combination the internal works do not harm the significance of the listed building.
10. The proposed two storey addition adds a further substantial extension to this already extended listed building. The foot print of the extension adds a substantial additional area to the building and the extended area of that building. The width of the proposed extension is greater than the existing extension and unadds further horizontal emphasis to the building detracting from its original more vertical form. The north facing elevation with its lower set windows at ground floor and inset dormer feature at first floor add elements that do not align or reflect the fenestration of the adjoining parts of the building. This draws attention to the nature of the extension and distracts from the original listed building.

11. Whilst the raising of the ridge height of the existing extension is not significant in itself when added to the proposed extension the combination of the reducing ridge heights rather than flowing one from the other adds additional complexity and articulation to the simple original cottage form.
12. Overall I conclude that the proposed alterations would harm the special architectural and historic interest of this grade II listed building and therefore its significance. Consequently the proposed development would conflict with policies E20, E26 and H18 of the Northampton Local Plan and policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, which collectively seek to ensure extensions are compatible with the host property and protect heritage assets including listed buildings.

Conservation Area

13. The appeal site is prominently located at the heart of the Great Houghton Conservation Area. The conservation area derives its significance, in part, from the self-contained nature of the village around its original historic plan form of a linear main street with side lanes and footpaths surrounded by fields. The loose knit informal layout and inter-relationship of buildings and open spaces combine with the changes in levels to create a distinct sense of place. The conservation area includes a concentration of good quality stone and brick buildings predominantly two storeys, with some three storeys, dating from the 17 century onwards. There are a number of the older buildings which are listed including that the subject of these appeals.
14. The buildings in the conservation area include a variety of styles and periods but are unified by a limited range of building materials including limestone, ironstone or red brick that reflects the evolution of the village.
15. The appeal property is prominently located in an elevated position above the village green and from where it is highly visible. Its north elevation is readily visible from surrounding streets and lanes and open spaces. The existing conservatory is not readily visible from public locations and the narrow and limited existing extension is readily discernible as a latter narrow addition to the original cottage.
16. The proposed extension would be highly visible in important views up from the Green and surrounding lanes. The elongated building form, variations in ridge heights and additional building masses would all add to the complexity of the building distracting from the plain and original simple form of the cottage. The elevational treatment of the north facing elevation with its lowered floor level, lowered window levels and unsympathetic dormer feature would add further distraction to the ordered form of the original elevation.
17. Given the prominence in the conservation the proposal would result in harm to the appearance of the building and the street scene and therefore the appearance of the conservation area would not be preserved. Consequently the proposal would conflict with policies E20, E26 and H18 of the Northampton Local Plan and policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, which collectively seek to ensure extensions are compatible with the host property and protected heritage assets including conservation areas.

Other matters

18. Much of the appellant's case seeks to assess the differences between this scheme and a previously approved scheme by the Council. I have taken this to be an implied fall-back position such that if this permission was not forthcoming then the approved scheme would be implemented which would then result in an impact and I should consider that impact.
19. I have considered the scheme that is before me and the effect that it would have, as I am required to do. It is only once that impact is properly understood can a proper assessment of the effect of any identified harm be made and I undertake that balance in my conclusions below.
20. The appellant contends that the proposals are the optimum viable use of the property given their family's necessity for an additional bedroom.

Overall Conclusions

21. The harm that I have identified to the Listed Building and to the Great Houghton Conservation Area, both designated heritage assets, would be less than substantial in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 134 of the Framework advises that where proposals would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
22. The appellant has not identified any public benefit associated with the proposals however has drawn attention to the family needs and requirement for additional bedroom accommodation. This is a private interest of the occupier however it could be that if the lack of bedrooms rendered the property uninhabitable, resolution of the problem could safeguard the property and thereby be a public interest, this however has not been contended. There is already bedroom accommodation at the property and this adds further accommodation. The property is a single family dwelling and it has not been contended that it would not remain so and therefore it is retained in a viable use. The previous extension identifies the Council accepts further accommodation can be added without the harm I have identified and therefore this would allow further accommodation to be added. This would add to the viable use of the property.
23. The previous extension approved by the Council is a material consideration however the proposed extensions are larger and add further to the dominance and impact of the extensions on the original property and which are harmful effects. The extant permission does not justify allowing further harm to the existing heritage assets.
24. The proposal results in less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets which is not outweighed by public benefits and the proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations to indicate a decision otherwise should be taken.
25. For the reasons given above I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

Kenneth Stone

INSPECTOR