
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 July 2019

by Jamie Reed DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/19/3227451

Rose Cottage, Longhoughton Road, Lesbury NE66 3AT

- 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 Mrs Lucy Thomas against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 18/04344/FUL, dated 11 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 7 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is ground and first floor extension to the cottage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mrs Lucy Thomas against Northumberland County Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the appeal property and the surrounding Lesbury Conservation Area (LCA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a semi-detached stone built cottage, situated in the LCA within the village of Lesbury. In addition to having a Conservation Area, the village also lies within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
5. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the LCA. Furthermore, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires attention to be paid to the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and to the positive contribution that their conservation can make. I have also had regard as to whether the proposal conserves or enhances the natural beauty of the AONB.
6. The LCA includes much of the historic core of Lesbury and consists predominantly of domestic scale, stone built buildings with natural slate roofs.

Many of the properties, including that which is the subject of this appeal, have generous gardens/lawns to their front, which are enclosed by low, random-stone walls and are set back from the highway and footpaths by wide grass verges. Such an arrangement gives the village a pleasant green and open characteristic.

7. The appeal property occupies a corner plot and is elevated from the Longhoughton Road, resulting in it being visually prominent within its immediate street scene. The proposed extensions to the property, which include 1st floor extensions to the side gable and rear, would be clearly visible from Longhoughton Road onto which they would face.
8. The appellant has suggested that the proposal would not harm the LCA and in order to support this argument a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared. The HIA explains that the proposal would be constructed from traditional materials and concludes that due to the appeal property being situated on the edge of the LCA any harm to individual elements of the fabric the proposal would only have a neutral impact upon the overall character, and therefore significance, of the LCA. Both the side gable and rear extensions would result in a pronounced increase in height of these parts of the building however, and would appear as unduly bulky additions that would dominate the cottage's original simplistic and traditional form. Furthermore, due to the appeal site's open and elevated corner position, the extensions would also be highly prominent within the streetscene, thereby further exacerbating their visual harm. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character, appearance and significance of the LCA. Due to the domestic scale and nature of the proposal within the context of the village however, it would not have a negative impact upon the natural beauty of the wider landscape of the AONB.
9. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies S15 and S16 of the Alnwick Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2007). When read together, these Policies require all development to achieve a high standard of design and preserve and where appropriate, enhance the LCA for the future.
10. As this harm to the significance of the LCA would be less than substantial, it is therefore necessary, in accordance with paragraph 196 of the Framework, to balance it against any public benefits from the proposal. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would improve the accommodation available at the appeal property for the occupiers, such benefits are not public and would not outweigh the great weight I must attach to the harm that the proposal would cause to the LCA.

Other Matters

11. The appellant has drawn my attention to another planning application¹ at the appeal property for an alternative proposal that was granted planning permission by the Council. From the limited information before me, it appears that this alternative scheme incorporated a reduction in the size of elements of the proposal which is the subject of this appeal. The appellant contends that the increase in size of these elements would still be in keeping with the character and appearance of the appeal property and the LCA. For the reasons

¹ Council Ref 18/02652/FUL

set out above, however, I have found the extensions to the appeal property to be harmful.

12. The appellant has also referred to a number of other extensions to traditional cottages within the village and has suggested that as a result of these, the proposal that is before me is acceptable. Whilst it is inevitable that comparisons may be made between developments, each has its own site-specific circumstances and merits upon which it is considered. The examples provided differ in various ways. Some involve properties of a different scale and proportion and others are orientated such so that their extensions are not as readily visible from public areas as that which is before me. Consequently, I attach only limited weight to this argument.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Jamie Reed

INSPECTOR