



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 12 November 2019

by Thomas Shields MA DipURP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 January 2020

Appeal A: APP/W0530/W/19/3230069

White Cottage, 82 High Street, Cottenham, Cambridge, CB24 8SD

- 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 Neil George against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref: S/0177/19/FL, dated 30 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 22 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is installation of PV Solar Panels fitted to rear extension.
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Appeal B: APP/W0530/Y/19/3230068

White Cottage, 82 High Street, Cottenham, Cambridge, CB24 8SD

- 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 Neil George against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref: S/4850/18/LB, dated 30 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 22 March 2019.
 - The works proposed are installation of PV Solar Panels fitted to rear extension.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development and works on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building No. 82 (White Cottage), High Street, and whether they would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Cottenham Conservation Area. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF) this can be defined as the effect of the proposed scheme on the significance of the designated heritage assets.

Reasons

3. In reaching my decisions I have had regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

4. The appeal property is a timber framed Grade II listed two storey cottage dating from the 18th century (Ref. 1331348). It abuts the back edge of the pavement, having its length along a north-south axis with a casement window either side of a central door, and finished in roughcast painted render with tall thatched roof with eaves just above ground floor level. The two storey addition to the rear has a slate roof and is of lower ridge height, and links to the rear of the principal roof along an east-west axis. I consider that all of these factors, taken together, are integral and important to the significance of the listed building and to the wider Cottenham Conservation Area.
5. The proposed eight black photovoltaic solar panels would be installed on a mounted frame covering most of the southern slope of the rear slate roof of the two storey addition. From outside of the property the panels would not be visible from views taken from the north along High Street, but would be visible in some views taken from the south, particularly so at shorter range. The black panels would have a shinier finish than the surrounding roof tiles and would undoubtedly be a modern and incongruous intervention to the roof slope.
6. Additionally, although the panels would not physically adjoin the thatched roof, in some angular views from the southern approach they would nonetheless appear to project from it, due to the thatched roof extending further to the south and being closer to the eye in the line of sight. As such, the optical effect is that the panels would appear directly against the historic thatched roof, which is an important feature integral to the significance of the listed building. In this context the solar panels would be an incongruously modernising feature, contrasting inappropriately with the existing historic fabric and at odds with the building's historic character and appearance, thereby resulting in harm to its significance. While I note that the works are potentially reversible, the panels (and resulting harm) would nevertheless be a feature of some considerable permanence. As such, and for the same reasons, I find that the proposal would also fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Cottenham Conservation Area.
7. The harm I have identified would be *less than substantial* in terms of paragraph 196 of the NPPF. Accordingly, the harm should be weighed against any public benefits arising from the proposal. In this regard I note that the solar panels would sustainably generate 2.56kWh of electricity per year, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation targets to which I attach weight in support of the appeal. However, paragraph 8 of the NPPF makes clear that an environmental objective of achieving sustainable development also includes contributing to protecting and enhancing the built and historic environment, and paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, "great weight" should be given to the asset's conservation.
8. In my view the public benefits would be a relatively small contribution towards mitigating the effects of climate change. As such, they would not outweigh the harm that I have identified to the listed building and the Cottenham Conservation Area, and thus would not be an environmental public benefit overall. Consequently, I conclude that the public benefits advanced in support of the appeal do not outweigh the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets.

9. The appellant refers to other solar panel developments in the area and to a 2013 appeal decision at Tissington. However, whatever the background to those developments might be, they set no precedent in this appeal as I have considered this proposal on its individual merits.

Conclusion

10. I conclude overall that the proposed solar panel scheme would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building at No. 82 (White Cottage) High Street. It would also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Cottenham Conservation Area. The harm to the significance of these designated heritage assets would not be outweighed by public benefits of the proposal. It would thus conflict with the Act, the NPPF, and LP Policies NH/14 and NH/15 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018).
11. For all the above reasons, and taking account of all other matters raised, the appeals are dismissed.

Thomas Shields

INSPECTOR