



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by Martin Small, BA (Hons), BPI, DipCM, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/D/19/3237787

Hilltop Farm, Newtown Road, Newtown, Awbridge, SO51 0GG

- 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 and Mrs Govan against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 19/01183/FULLS dated 8 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of side extension to provide additional living area and bedroom.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, with particular regard to its significance as a non-designated heritage asset, and the area.

Reasons

Background

3. From the evidence before me, the proposed development is a revised proposal following the refusal of permission for the erection of a side extension to provide additional living area and bedroom in March 2019. I do not have the full details of that previous application, but from the information before me the revisions include a reduction in the dimensions of the proposed extension.

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is a cob-walled and thatched cottage. From the evidence before me and my observations during my site visit, its original function as a farmhouse and its setting have changed. Nevertheless, it retains historic and architectural significance as an example of the historic form of development and vernacular architecture in the area. In my judgement it can justifiably be considered a non-designated heritage asset.
5. Paragraph 184 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out that heritage assets "*are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance*". Paragraph 197 of the Framework requires a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any

harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset when weighing applications that affect non-designated heritage assets.

6. The appeal property is located within an area with a generally sporadic pattern of development. Although there is no definitive style or design of dwellings or conformity in plot sizes or how properties address the road along Newtown Road, existing properties are predominantly large and set in large plots. The gaps between these dwellings contribute significantly to the character and appearance of the locality.
7. I observed during my site visit that when approaching from the south-east, there is a clear gap between the appeal property and Hilltop Barn to the south. Although not large, this gap allows views beyond the dwellings and allows a clear distinction between the historic appeal property and the relatively recently constructed Hilltop Barn. The proposed extension would be visible when approaching from the south-east and would physically and visually fill this gap to a substantially greater extent than the existing rear extension.
8. When approaching from the north-west, the proposed extension would be largely hidden by an existing tall conifer hedge along the boundary of the appeal property. However, although lower than a typical two-storey dwelling, using the rear dormer window in the appeal property and the chimney of the existing extension as reference points, the ridge of the roof of the proposed extension would be higher than the hedge as I observed it during my site visit and the roof of the glazed gable feature would also be visible.
9. The proposed extension would be set back from Newtown Road such that it would not be prominent when passing the property along the road. However, a public footpath joins Newtown Road immediately opposite the appeal property. I observed during my site visit that from this footpath approaching the road there would be a direct view of the proposed extension and it would block the attractive view to the trees to the west of the appeal property.
10. The proposed extension would therefore result in an increase in the visual impact of the existing dwelling. Furthermore, the size of the proposed extension and its positioning on the plot would relate awkwardly to Hilltop Barn and result in a cramped form of development at odds with the generally spacious pattern of development in the area.
11. The proposed materials for the extension would match those of the existing extension and I find them acceptable as they would help distinguish the extension from the historic cottage. The proposed extension would be set back from the host dwelling and linked to the existing extension to the property. The proposed extension would therefore not obscure any elevations or features of the historic host dwelling when approaching or passing the property, which could still be appreciated.
12. However, notwithstanding that the height of the proposed extension would be lower than that of the host dwelling and the reduction in overall dimensions from the previously refused proposal, the bulk of the extension would be virtually that of the original dwelling. The proposed extension would compete with rather than respect the modest proportions and detailing of the historic cottage and it would be harmful to the setting of the cottage. The loss of the visual separation between Hilltop Barn and the appeal property would also diminish the ability to appreciate the latter as a separate historic cottage in

what remains of its original context. Accordingly, although the harm would be limited, in my judgement the proposed development would be harmful to the significance of the appeal property.

13. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be contrary to Policy COM11 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan 2011-2029 (TVBRLP). This policy requires proposals for the extension of dwellings to not be more visually intrusive in the landscape, which the supporting text to this policy indicates relates to the property, not just to the proposed extension. The proposed development is also contrary to Policy COM2 of the TVBRLP, which restricts development outside settlement boundaries to that set out in specified policies of the Plan or which is essential to be located in the countryside, as it satisfies neither of these circumstances.
14. The proposed development would also be contrary to Policy E1 of the TVBRLP which requires development to be of a high quality in terms of design and local distinctiveness, including by integrating, respecting and complementing the character of the area. In this respect, the proposal would also conflict with paragraph 127 c) of the Framework which requires planning decisions to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history.
15. I also find conflict with Policy E9 of the TVBRLP which requires development affecting a heritage asset to make a positive contribution to sustaining or enhancing the significance of the asset taking account of character, appearance and setting. Having regard to the balanced judgement required by paragraph 197 of the Framework, the proposal would also conflict with paragraph 184.

Other Matters

16. I note the appellants' contention that the orientation and scale of the proposed extension has been 'forced' on them by the effect on their living conditions of the recent development of Hilltop Barn. However, the presence of this dwelling does not justify an extension to the appeal property of the size proposed as a more modest extension could achieve the desired re-orientation of outlook. Neither it, nor the desire to have more space for family members, outweigh the conflict with the development plan that I have identified above.
17. I note that the Parish Council has objected to the proposed development on the grounds of visual intrusion, overshadowing and potential noise disturbance. I have considered visual intrusion above. Given the distance between the appeal property and Cherry Hayes to the north, the proposed development would not result in a material loss of sunlight for the occupiers of Cherry Hayes.
18. I have no evidence that suggests the use of the proposed extension would give rise to unacceptable level of noise. I note that the Council has not raised any concerns regarding the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, nor regarding highway safety or biodiversity. I give these matters neutral weight in my decision.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, and having regard to the other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Small INSPECTOR