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## Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 21 February 2020

**by Mr JP Sargent BA(Hons) MA MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 2 March 2020**

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### **Appeal A: APP/H1840/W/19/3240594**

#### **Drakes Bridge, Drakes Bridge Road, Eckington WR10 3BN**

- 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 E Mustin against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
  - The application Ref 19/01490/HP, dated 28 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2019.
  - The development proposed is a replacement 2-storey rear extension and detached car port.
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### **Appeal B: APP/H1840/Y/19/3240598**

#### **Drakes Bridge, Drakes Bridge Road, Eckington WR10 3BN**

- 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 E Mustin against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
  - The application Ref 19/01491/LB, dated 28 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2019.
  - The works proposed are a replacement 2-storey rear extension and detached car port.
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### **Procedural matters**

1. The appellant submitted drawing 1819-10B with the appeals, reducing slightly the size of the rear extension. I have assessed the scheme against that drawing as I consider no party has been prejudiced by the changes it makes.

### **Decisions**

#### **Appeal A**

2. The appeal is dismissed.

#### **Appeal B**

3. The appeal is dismissed.

### **Main Issue**

4. The main issue in this case is whether the works would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade II listed building and their effect on its significance as a designated heritage asset.

### **Reasons**

5. Drakes Bridge is a long, thin cottage that dates from the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Centuries but has undergone numerous alterations since. In particular it appears to have

been extended westwards and it also has a rear single storey lean-to extension. Although now one property, I understand that it has been subdivided into 4 in the past.

6. Overall, I consider its significance as a heritage asset rests in part in the way it continues to reflect its origins as a relatively humble rural dwelling and, in this regard, it displays an architectural and historic interest. This is shown through the presence of internal features such as those cited in the listing description, as well as its linear, narrow plan form, and its simple detailing.
7. The extension would not directly affect the internal features such as the inglenook fireplace, the chamfered beams or the plank doors. I also accept that it would be physically lower than the existing property. However, when viewed from the rear its scale, its tall gables and its various large windows would mean it would not be a subservient or subordinate addition on this old, humble cottage. Rather, because of these aspects it would relate poorly to the original building, overwhelming it and dominating it unacceptably, eroding its narrow plan form and appreciably undermining the sense of simplicity that I consider so important to its significance.
8. I accept that the extension would be at the back of the house. That though does not mean these effects are of no consequence as, while substantially private, that elevation still plays an important role in understanding the origins of the cottage and appreciating its simple character. In any event, the impact of the works would nonetheless be apparent from the public domain when on Drakes Bridge Road to the west, as the side elevation of the extension would be notable, extending rearwards well beyond the existing 2-storey gable.
9. I also noted the various windows on the rear elevation now, both on the main property and the single storey lean-to. However, these are generally small, reflecting the historic character of the building, and so contrast sharply with the large ground and first floor windows proposed.
10. Accordingly, I conclude this element of the proposal would cause harm, albeit less than substantial, to the significance of this listed building, failing to preserve its special architectural and historic interest.
11. The works would result in the removal of the lean-to, which appears to be in poor condition and seems to have been an ad hoc incremental addition. Whilst the Council said it demonstrated that the building had previously been subdivided, I saw little evidence to mean that assertion is readily apparent. Overall, I consider its loss is not, in itself, a reason to resist this proposal. However, given its scale, its height and the form of its windows, its removal is not a particular benefit to the heritage asset either.
12. Turning to the other elements of the scheme, the porch would be of a sympathetic scale and design. With regard to the car port, this would be well away from the house to one side and would be significantly concealed from general view by the road as it rises over the railway bridge. Moreover, it too would have a sympathetic design and its materials could be suitably controlled. As a result, I find that neither of these elements would cause harm to the significance of the listed building or, in the case of the car port, its setting.
13. I have therefore found that the rear extension would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the building and so, under the *National*

*Planning Policy Framework*, this needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the building's optimum viable use. I accept that Drakes Bridge is in clear need of maintenance and renovation, and that its use as a dwelling is unlikely to resume until such works have been undertaken. I also appreciate that the proposal is offered as a means to secure such works. Moreover, if it were to be occupied again there would no doubt be some slight social and economic benefits to the village whilst the refurbishment would be expected to deliver some environmental improvements with regards to energy and water efficiency for example. However, I have no evidence to show that bringing the house back into use can only be achieved through the extension before me, or that there is no other way to renovate the building or create a useable family home that is more suitable and sensitive to its significance and interest. Therefore, any public benefits arising from the appellants' intentions do not outweigh the harm identified.

14. Accordingly, I conclude that the rear extension, because of its scale and design, would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of this building, causing less than substantial harm to its significance as a designated heritage asset. In the absence of any public benefits to outweigh this harm, I therefore find the proposal conflicts with Policies SWDP6, SWDP21 and SWDP24 of the *South Worcestershire Development Plan*, which broadly seek to ensure new development relates to its surroundings and protects heritage assets, and guidance in the *National Planning Policy Framework*.

### **Conclusions**

15. Accordingly, I conclude both appeals should be dismissed.

*JP Sargent*

INSPECTOR