
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 July 2020

by Gareth W Thomas BSc(Hons) MSc(Dist) PgDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F1610 /Y/19/3243389

Green Garden Cottage, Cirencester Road, Aldsworth GL54 3QR

- 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 & Mrs Corrett against the decision of Cotswold District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01814/LBC, dated 14 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 July 2019.
 - The works proposed are for the erection of a single storey side extension with associated works (including part removal of walls).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and listed building consent is refused for the erection of a single storey side extension with associated works (including part removal of walls).

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the local area bearing in mind the special attention to be paid to preserving the interest of the Grade II listed building, Green Garden Cottage (list entry 1154296, Green Garden Cottages), and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Aldsworth Conservation Area.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

3. The Council has included a list of policies in its submissions. Cotswold Local Plan (CLP) Policy EN2 on the design of the built and natural environments states that development will be permitted where it accords with the Cotswold Design Code and that proposals should be of a design quality that respects the character and distinctive appearance of the area. Policies EN10 and EN11 are specific to designated heritage assets and reiterate national policy on the subject.
4. The appellants draw my attention to The Cotswolds Design Code; sections D.67a-f set out the expectations in relation to the scale, proportions, materials and character, with reference being made for the need for simplicity and subservience although acknowledging that a contemporary approach may be acceptable provided the extension respects the character of the building and does not diminish the building's quality and integrity.

5. Paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 193 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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.
6. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving the listed building and any features it possesses. The significance of Green Garden Cottage in terms of its exterior lies in its handsome stonework, stepped roofs to the three elevational sections, distinctive mullioned windows and robust linear form; all characteristic of the Cotswold vernacular. Its position close to the road as it rises from the south gives it a particular prominence from within the Aldsworth Conservation Area (ACA).
7. The ACA is characterised by a range and size of dwellings, consisting of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses unified by the use of Cotswold limestone and traditional roofing materials in the main. The layout of buildings reflect previous field patterns and the presence of limestone boundary walling and mature planting punctured by views of the open countryside on the edge of the village adds to the agrarian character of the Conservation Area.
8. The appeal property, formerly two mid to late 19th century cottages now in single occupation, sits with its end gable abutting Cirencester Road and set within extensive grounds containing an outbuilding. The gable and first floor windows and roofscape are clearly visible from the public domain although the location of the proposed extension is not readily visible from public viewpoints. The proposal comprises various internal and external elements, namely a single storey pitch roofed extension to provide additional living space including kitchen and dining facilities, a family room and a bedroom together with the removal of existing internal and external walling and mullion window. I would agree with the appellants' analysis of some of the elements that would be lost in so far as the removal of a later circa 20th century mullion window and part of the walling below. I turn later to consideration of the loss of other parts of the structure.
9. Whilst the proposed extension would be built largely of stone and would take advantage of taking the alignment of the garden walling, the length of the extension amounting to some 14m although accentuating the linear form that exists would demonstrably fail to be subservient to the host dwelling. Moreover, it would unacceptably and visually compete with the present restrained form of the building. In addition, the large modern patio windows would fail to respect the proportions of those of the existing dwelling and would result in a particularly jarring and incongruent composition when viewed alongside the front elevation of the cottage.
10. The appellants claim that the extension would be furthest from the more sensitive taller 2-storey section that abuts the village street and that from public vantage points, the extension would not be particularly visible or prominent. However, I consider that the proposed extension would substantially alter the overall plan form of the host property and would adversely affect the linearity of the heritage asset. It would significantly alter

the appearance of the listed building and unacceptably compete with the traditional, modest and characterful cottage appearance of the host property.

11. I accept that the existing window in the gable end of the present kitchen is of more modern origins and that part of the walling to this window that will be lost would not unacceptably undermine the evidential value of this historic asset. However, the loss of part of the original gable walling to the larder/kitchen area and internal walling in the hall area would be unfortunate. Indeed, although the significance of the listed building lies partly in its association with the local Manorial Estates and its previous arrangement as two dwellings, the original gable wall and internal walling areas in the existing kitchen and hallway within the structure play an important role in the building's history. Their loss would therefore be detrimental to an understanding of the evolution of Green Garden Cottage.
12. While the appellants have offered to retain nib sections of original walling as a marker of the historical development of the property over time, the further loss of historic fabric leading to additional erosion of the plan form would have a marked adverse effect on the understanding and appreciation of Green Garden Cottage.
13. Therefore, to sum up, the excessively elongated nature of the proposed extension would be a striking and strong contrast to the functional and historic character of the property. It would be read as a large modern extension with little connection with the character of the host property particularly when reading the modest stepping arrangement of the three elements of the front and rear facades. Consequently, it would unacceptably diminish the special interest and significance of this listed building. Further, the loss of historic fabric would also serve to erode the plan form and remove a substantial portion of historic gable and internal walling that add to the evidential value of Green Garden Cottage.
14. For these reasons, and mindful of my duties arising from sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act, I conclude that the proposed works would fail to preserve the special interest of the building and its setting.

Effects on appeal scheme on the Conservation Area

15. I saw at my site visit that the location of the proposed extension due to the position of the existing property relative to the village street and the presence of existing outbuildings, dwellings and height of boundary walling and greenery in its vicinity would provide extremely limited visibility from both public and private viewpoints. For these reasons, I consider that the proposed development would only have a negligible effect on the wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area and, as a result, I find no material harm would occur to its significance.
16. For these reasons, and mindful of my duty under section 72 (1) of the Act, I conclude that the proposed development would at the very least preserve the character of the Conservation Area.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

17. Although I have found that no harm would occur to the significance of the ACA as a result of the appeal scheme, I have found harm to the significance and special interest of Green Garden Cottage. The Framework establishes that

when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a listed building, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

18. In this instance, I consider that the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset; the Framework makes it clear that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the heritage asset's optimum viable use. However, no such arguments have been suggested by the appellants and I have been unable to identify any public benefits that would weigh in favour of the proposal.
19. My attention has been drawn to an appeal at Culls Cottage, Southrop¹ and that comparisons should be drawn between that case and this appeal. However, in his decision the Inspector found that the design of the extension would respond appropriately to the form and massing of the listed building and its surroundings. From the drawings of that proposal usefully provided by the appellants, it is apparent that the location of the extension was very different to what is proposed in this appeal. Although the relevant material considerations that informed this decision are not before me, it is noteworthy that in finding that no harm would occur from the appeal proposal, the Inspector also noted that there would be some limited public benefits arising from the scheme. In this case I have considered the relative merits of the appeal proposal and have found that unacceptable harm would occur and no counter public benefits would arise.
20. Whilst the harm to the designated harm may be considered less than substantial, this should not be equated with less than substantial objection, particularly when the statutory duties to preserve the listed building has not been met. Furthermore, the absence of any public benefits that might outweigh the identified harm further militates against the appeal succeeding.
21. For the reasons given above and having considered all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

Gareth W Thomas

INSPECTOR

¹ APP/F1610/W/18/3217987