
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 November 2020

by C Dillon BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/20/3256442

Town View Cottage, West End, Holy Island TD15 2SQ

- 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 Liese Mackie against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00272/FUL, dated 28 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 16 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is replacement of front door and windows, creation of under-croft leading from front to rear, insertion of two conservation roof-lights to front slope, rear two-storey extension, construction of new boundary treatments to southern and western boundaries.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed rear extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, with particular regard to scale, mass and design;
 - whether or not the appeal proposal would conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Holy Island Conservation Area and the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
 - the effect of the proposed rear extension on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties, with particular regard to privacy and outlook.

Procedural Matter

3. An amended plan forms part of this appeal submission and seeks to address concerns about overlooking. However, this revision was not considered through the determination of the planning application. As this has not been subject to public consultation, the appeal proceeds on the basis of the refused scheme, so as not to prejudice any other parties' interests.

Reasons

Effect on character and appearance of host building

4. The proposed rear extension would replace an existing unremarkable and subservient addition to the rear elevation of this very modest single storey cottage. In doing so, however, this contemporary addition would span almost the full width of this simple rear elevation. It would also project significantly outwards to increase the available living space. Consequently, the dwelling's mass would be significantly increased and from the rear it would be more akin to a two storey dwelling. Furthermore, the proposed eaves and ridge height and introduction of a first floor elevation would represent a misalignment.
5. Coupled with the proposed roof design, the proposed rear extension would both dominate and be jarring with the existing dwelling's small scale and simple linear form. The proposed rear extension would not be subservient to the host building. It would not sit comfortably with the character and appearance of the original building. As such, it would not accord with the Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD).
6. The proposed materials, degree of glazing and contemporary design are all evident elsewhere on the Island. However, they would not sufficiently mitigate the adverse impact of this proposal and would serve to erode the strong solid to void ratio which is characteristic of the existing dwelling. Furthermore, the fact that the proposal would be located to the rear of the dwelling, would not justify its adverse impact. This is because that elevation enjoys an exposed front-of-line seaward aspect and the proposed extension and its effects would be evident from both close up and more distant public vantage points.
7. For these reasons, I find that the proposed rear extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling, with particular regard to scale, mass and design.
8. Saved Policy F2 of the Berwick upon Tweed Borough Local Plan (the Local Plan) requires development to accord with its surroundings by virtue of its scale, height and massing. Given the identified harm, the appeal proposal conflicts with this policy. This weighs significantly against the appeal proposal.

Effect on designations

Holy Island Conservation Area

9. The appeal site is located within the Holy Island Conservation Area. The significance of this designated heritage asset relates to the Island's historic, architectural and cultural associations with the Lindisfarne Castle and Priory. This part of the Conservation Area is characterised by an intimate collection of traditional, mostly residential buildings of varying designs and heights. Their consistency is based on the limited palette of external materials, simple roof forms, vertically proportioned openings and strong solid to void elevational ratios.
10. The front elevation of the appeal property faces directly onto a main street scene and its small scale and simplistic appearance contributes positively to its heritage context. The rear elevation and in particular the low, simple and largely uninterrupted roofscape, forms part of the exposed historic vista of the Island from both the nearby Tripping Chare pedestrian route and the more

distant approach to the Island. In all, the appeal property contributes positively to the important distinctive character and appearance of this Conservation Area.

11. The alterations proposed to the front elevation, including the creation of an additional door opening and insertion of roof lights, would change the outward appearance of the building. These changes would not be unsympathetic to the building's character or that of its wider sensitive street scene context, subject to precise detailing which could be controlled by a planning condition.
12. However, I have already established that the proposed rear extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling by virtue of its scale, mass and design. That harm would translate to those important historic views of the appeal site. This would impede the site's ability to continue to positively contribute to its wider important heritage context.
13. It has been advanced that the proposals would not be out of keeping with the area and alterations to other properties. I do not find that any of these examples are sufficiently comparable to the appeal proposal in terms of the impacts that I have identified. Indeed, neither the development plan for the area nor the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) preclude contemporary design solutions. However, overall, this appeal proposal would not adequately respect the scale, mass and design of the host property, which in turn contributes to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.
14. Therefore, overall, the appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Holy Island Conservation Area. In view of that harm, the appeal proposal would neither conserve nor enhance the Holy Island Conservation Area.
15. In exercising my statutory duty, I have identified harm to the significance of the Holy Island Conservation Area. This harm would be less than substantial. As such, this harm must be weighed against any public benefits. However, no benefits have been advanced that would constitute public benefits. The proposal therefore does not accord with the Framework in this regard.
16. Saved Policy F1 of the Local Plan refers to the area's 'environmental wealth' as including human heritage. It states that proposals should sustain or enhance this. Given the harm that I have identified to the significance of the Conservation Area, the appeal proposal conflicts with this policy. This weighs heavily against the appeal proposal.
17. I have found that the appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Holy Island Conservation Area. Furthermore, it would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of this designated heritage asset. This is contrary to the expectations of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the development plan.

Northumberland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

18. No specific evidence has been submitted to confirm the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB). Therefore, necessarily, I observed the intrinsic beauty and character of this designated coastal area, its sensitivity and the appeal site's contribution to it from both short and longer distance views.

19. The appeal site forms part of a group of buildings on an exposed edge of the built-up framework of the Island. I have already concluded that the proposed rear extension would cause visual harm to both the character and appearance of its host and the wider Conservation Area. Consequently, that harm would translate itself to the AONB, albeit it would represent an incremental change relative to this important wider context.
20. Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing AONBs. However, in view of the identified harm, the appeal proposal would neither conserve nor enhance the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast AONB.
21. Saved Policy F1 of the Local Plan refers to the area's 'environmental wealth' and extends to this important designation. It states that proposals should sustain or enhance it. Furthermore, saved Policy F2 of the Local Plan states that within this area, primary importance will be attached to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and coast. New development must accord with its surroundings by virtue of its scale, height and massing amongst other things.
22. Given the harm that I have identified, the appeal proposal conflicts with these policies. This weighs against the appeal proposal.

Living conditions

23. The proposed rear extension would result in the creation of both ground and first floor living areas to be served by a large expanse of glass. Combined with the relationship of the resulting rear elevation with the rear garden area of Kyle Villa, I find that this would create an undue sense of surveillance from first floor level over a significant part of that rear garden area. This would diminish existing privacy levels for the occupiers of that property to an unacceptable degree. The suggested mitigation is insufficient to overcome this.
24. By virtue of its height, positioning and projection along the boundary with Yacht Cottage, the proposed rear extension would remove the already limited open aspect which that property currently enjoys from the kitchen and rear yard area of that dwelling. This would close off what little exposed aspect is available and that would have an unacceptable overbearing impact upon the occupiers of that dwelling.
25. For these reasons, the appeal proposal would be harmful to the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties, with particular regard to privacy and outlook.
26. The Council's SPD acknowledges that rear extensions are more likely to affect neighbours. It sets out means by which harmful effects upon neighbouring properties can be avoided in terms of fenestration, height, projection and relationship with common boundaries. Furthermore paragraph 127 of the Framework requires decisions to promote a high standard of amenity.
27. Saved Policy F2 of the Local Plan requires development to accord with its surroundings by virtue of its scale, height and massing. However, whilst cited in the reasons for refusal, the justification for this policy does not directly relate to safeguarding living conditions.

28. Nonetheless, in view of the identified harm, the appeal proposal would be in conflict with the SPD and the Framework and this attracts some weight which weighs against the proposal.

Other Matters

29. The appellant has advanced a fallback position relating to the exercising of householder permitted development rights to erect a rear extension. However, the details submitted do not demonstrate that this would be capable of justifying the appeal proposal, particularly given the insufficient level of detail provided and the nature and degree of harm that I have identified in relation to the appeal proposal.
30. The appellant has advanced that the appeal proposal would enable full-time occupancy of the unit by a family with local connections in an area where many dwellings are second homes and holiday-homes. In the absence of any evidence regarding local housing needs, I can attach only limited weight to this. This does not out-weigh the harm that I have found.
31. Furthermore, I have had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which sets out the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Since the appellant has confirmed that the appeal scheme is required to meet the household's complex medical and associated mobility needs, the proposal relates to persons who share protected characteristic for the purpose of the PSED.
32. The appellant has advanced that the proposal has been designed to meet the accessibility needs of their family. However, it does not follow from the PSED that the appeal should succeed. I have found that harm would arise from the appeal proposal in respect to the character and appearance of the host building, Conservation Area and AONB and also to the living conditions of neighbouring residents. With the exception of the latter, this would conflict with the development plan. The nature and degree of this is not out-weighed by the appellant's requirements.

Conclusion

33. For the reasons given, I have found that the appeal proposal would present harm which would be in conflict with the development plan for the area and there are no material considerations that would out-weigh this. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Dillon

PLANNING INSPECTOR