

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by S Edwards MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 January 2021

Appeal A Ref: APP/D1265/W/20/3259011

The Old Forge, Mill Lane, Chetnole DT9 6PB

- 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 Christopher Davies against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref WD/D/20/000096, dated 3 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of a single storey extension and insertion of 2.no roof lights.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/D1265/Y/20/3259007

The Old Forge, Mill Lane, Chetnole DT9 6PB

- 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 Christopher Davies against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref WD/D/20/000097, dated 3 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 April 2020.
 - The works proposed are internal and external alterations to facilitate the erection of a single storey extension and insertion of two roof lights.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The proposed development and works affect a listed building located in a conservation area, and I have therefore had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. As both appeals relate to the same site and raise similar issues, I shall therefore consider them in a single document, in the interests of brevity.
4. The description of the proposed development and works as detailed on the application form has been amended in subsequent documents. I have adopted the descriptions included on the appeal forms, which detail the extent of the proposed development and works more precisely.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposed development and works would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed

building known as the Old Forge, and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Chetnole Conservation Area.

Reasons

6. The Old Forge is an unusual two storey listed property, which presents its rear elevation and a striking catslide roof to the Mill Lane street scene, and very deep eaves to the rear garden. The property, which is constructed of rendered walls and a slate roof, with contrasting red brick chimney stacks, probably dates from the 18th century, as noted within the listing description, and has been subject to a number of alterations and extensions.
7. The appeal premises are presently in a poor state of repair, and the roof of the outbuilding sited along the site's eastern boundary has partially collapsed. Nevertheless, the principal elevation of the main dwelling in particular retains many historic external and internal features, which include a pedimented timber porch flanked by ground and first floor casement windows, with a carved stone quatrefoil panel set above the formal entrance. The significance of this Grade II listed building derives primarily from its architectural and historic interest, having particular regard to the neo-classical detailing of its principal elevation, which contrasts with the prevailing vernacular style of the site's immediate surroundings. Additionally, its unusual built form reflects the way that the building has been adapted over time to suit the needs of its occupiers.
8. The appeal site is bordered by the River Wriggle and is located within the Chetnole Conservation Area, and the wider Blackmoor Vale Landscape Character Area. Although there are a number of more modern developments within the settlement, the historic core of the village remains discernible. The pattern of development, notably established by the historic buildings, forms part of the special interest of the Conservation Area as a modest settlement of traditional and rural character. As such, the appeal property makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Chetnole Conservation Area.
9. Amongst other things, the appeal scheme seeks to replace the existing single storey side addition. The Council consider that the existing structure is of little architectural merit, other than the existing casement window to the South-East elevation, which may date from the 19th or early 20th century. The footprint of the new addition would be noticeably larger than the existing and would appear unduly close to the principal elevation of the property. When associated with the height of the proposed pitched roof, this would create a substantial addition which would dominate the unusual flank elevation of the Grade II listed dwelling and unacceptably obscure a large part of the building's fabric. This would be exacerbated by the detailed design of the proposal, which would insufficiently reflect the proportions, scale and form of the Grade II listed property.
10. Moreover, no attempt appears to have been made to reuse any of the existing openings, which presently contribute to the special interest of the designated heritage asset. In the absence of substantive evidence demonstrating otherwise, I see no reasons why the metal casement window in particular could not be repaired and appropriately included as part of a new extension. For these reasons, the new addition, which would be visible within the street scene, would be detrimental to the special interest of the listed building, but also to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

11. The Council is satisfied that the proposed rooflights to the elevation fronting Mill Lane and the removal of internal partition walls between the existing hall, bathroom and kitchen would not harm the significance of the designated heritage asset, and there are no reasons for me to take a different view. However, the removal of the wall between the studio and kitchen would result in the loss of important historic fabric, but also compromise the plan form and layout of the property, which show how it has evolved over time, especially in respect of the development of the outshot. In the absence of substantive evidence to the contrary, I find that these works would erode the special interest of the listed building, and have a harmful effect on its understanding and appreciation.
12. The opening up of the wall located at first floor level to enable the creation of a bathroom would lead to some loss of historic fabric. However, this would overall remain limited in scale. I am therefore satisfied that these works would preserve the significance of the Grade II listed building, as the plan form could still be fully appreciated.
13. I also share the concerns raised by the Council regarding the installation of a concrete sub-floor over a damp proof membrane. Older buildings generally rely on allowing the moisture which has been absorbed by the fabric to evaporate from the surface. 'Breathable' (or 'permeable') materials have therefore been historically favoured, as they are able to absorb moisture and release it again. However, the use of concrete, which is known to be a non-breathable material, may lead to increased moisture levels, particularly as it could trap excess moisture within walls and increase the likelihood of historic fabric decay. For the above reasons, I am unconvinced that this would be appropriate for this historic building.
14. The appeal scheme would cause less than substantial harm to the special interest of the listed building, but also the character and appearance of the Chetnole Conservation Area, to which, together, I ascribe considerable importance and weight. In accordance with the requirements of paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the identified harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
15. Although the property is currently in a poor state of repair and has been added to the Council's Building at Risk Register, some repair works could be carried out irrespective of the proposed extension, particularly as the current size of the dwelling does not preclude its use as a family dwelling. The proposed development and works would assist with bringing the listed building back to viable use, and secure its long term future as a designated heritage asset, to which I afford less than considerable weight. However, the harm which I have identified, would not be outweighed by the public benefits derived from the appeal scheme.
16. The proposal would provide additional living accommodation and could enhance the overall layout of the property, as well as bringing additional light and improving the thermal efficiency of the dwelling, but these would largely constitute private benefits. A number of third parties have expressed support for the proposal and the improvement that such works would bring to the Mill Lane street scene, which I have taken into consideration, as well as the personal circumstances of the appellant. However, if the appeals were allowed,

the proposed extension would become a permanent feature within the street scene, which I have found harm to. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed extension represents the only way by which additional accommodation could be created.

17. Overall, the appeal scheme would fail to preserve or enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed property and the character and appearance of the Chetnole Conservation Area. It would therefore be contrary to Policies ENV4 and ENV12 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (Adopted October 2015), as well as section 16 of the Framework. These notably require development proposals to conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets, whilst complementing and enhancing the character of the surrounding area.

Other Matters

18. My attention has been drawn to the pre-application response which the appellant has previously received from the Council. Although I understand the appellant's frustration in that regard, I am also mindful that such discussions are informal and not binding upon any formal determination which the Council may make.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons detailed above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

S Edwards

INSPECTOR