The Planning Inspectorate

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 February 2021

**by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

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

**Decision date: 25 March 2021**

**Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/D/20/3260903**
**Millars Cottage, Mill Lane, Hopton, Suffolk IP22 2RG**

- 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 & Mrs Dakin against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
- The application Ref DC/20/0797/HH, dated 18 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 August 2020.
- The development proposed is described as 'erection of two storey to west gable, extend existing single storey lean-to to east elevation, erection of 2 bay detached garage'.

## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed in so far as it relates to the two-storey extension.

2. The appeal is allowed in so far as it relates to the single storey extension and detached garage. Planning permission is therefore granted to extend the existing single storey lean-to to east elevation and to the erect a two bay detached garage at Millars Cottage, Mill Lane, Hopton, Suffolk IP22 2RG, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: DC/20/0797/HH, dated 18 May 2020, subject to the following conditions.

    1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

    2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawings Nos. 100, 200, 201, 300, 301 and 302.

    3. The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed from the materials detailed on the application form.

## Reasons

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed two storey side extension on the character and appearance of the area.

4. The appeal site encompasses a detached property located adjacent to a rural track which is also a public right of way. The immediate surroundings are rural with a particularly pleasant outlook to the north over fields and woodland. The appeal property has a simple hipped roofed form over

rendered walls. It is pleasant and unassuming in appearance and sits comfortably in the rural setting.

5. The existing dwelling is orientated with the 'front' elevation facing over the rear garden and the 'rear' elevation facing the public right of way. The rear elevation has been extended with a slightly awkward two-storey lean-to type addition, but this is finished in matching materials and the windows have a balanced composition and complementary cottage style appearance.

6. The proposed two storey side extension would inelegantly elongate the dwelling in a way that would not appear subservient or subordinate to the host property. The setback would appear contrived and would not soften the presence of the bulky cross wing and its prominent gable, which would be a jarring form out of proportion with the host property. This would result in the extension having a competing and overpowering impact when considered relative to the massing of the existing property.

7. Moreover, the boarded finish would lack harmony and would incongruously set the extension apart from the original house. An impact compounded by the window design and placement and the higher eaves line on the rear elevation. The seamless roof plane to the rear would also be an awkward jarring feature that would compound the unintegrated and disjointed effect of the two-storey extension.

8. Taken as a whole, the proposed two storey extension would be significantly at odds with the host dwelling in terms of its form, massing and use of materials. It would therefore fail to respect the existing property, the character and appearance of which the development plan seeks to preserve despite it not being listed or in a conservation area. The harmful and discordant presence of the extension would be visible from the public right of way and this would harm the character and appearance of the area.

9. The retention of existing landscaping would not mitigate this impact because the extension would still be visible. In addition, landscaping cannot be relied upon to screen unacceptable development because its longevity cannot be guaranteed, as it may die or be removed in the future. There are dwellings nearby that are larger than Millars Cottage, but this does not justify the disjointed and awkward appearance the extension would have.

10. The appellants' submissions suggest that the design of the extension has been inspired by traditional Suffolk barns, but I find this entirely unconvincing. This is because the extension would have the overt character of a domestic extension due to its form, fenestration (which would be UPVc), the inclusion of a chimney and it being attached to the dwelling with a two-storey link. The property is in a sparsely settled rural location and the public right of way may only be used by around ten people a day. However, these points would not mitigate the harm I have identified, which would be particularly apparent to those that do use the public right of way.

11. In conclusion, the two-storey side extension would harm the character and appearance of the area placing it at odds with Policies DM2 and DM24 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015 (DMP) and Policy CS3 of the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy 2010. These policies seek to secure high quality design that recognises key features of a building and, in

the case of extensions in the countryside, respect the character, scale and design of existing dwellings and are demonstrably subordinate to the original dwelling. These policies are consistent with Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework and can therefore be afforded full weight for the purposes of considering the main issue in this appeal.

**Other Matters and Conditions**

12. The proposed single storey lean-to extension would harmonise with the host property and be subservient to it, with a complementary form and use of materials. The proposed outbuilding would be subserviently set back from the site frontage and would relate well to the existing outbuilding. I therefore share the view of the Council that these elements of the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the area. This would not however, justify the harm that would occur from the two-storey extension.

13. The appellants have referred me to other extensions, but these only serve to confirm my concerns that the two-storey extension would jar with the host property. In any event, the context and circumstances appear different. No objections have been received from interested parties in respect of the proposal as a whole and the Parish Council supported it. However, I have come to my own conclusions for the reasons given and the absence of objections does not overcome the conflict with the development plan.

14. The proposal would enlarge the property and therefore has the potential to improve living conditions. However, the existing property appears to function adequately as a dwelling. The fact that there is no evidence before me of long periods of vacancy and its apparently good condition are testament to this. Extending the dwelling may be more environmentally preferable to a one for one replacement, but there is nothing of substance before me to demonstrate a replacement dwelling would be inevitable in the event this appeal fails. The two-storey extension would result in some modest economic benefits to the construction industry, but this would not outweigh the harm that would occur. Overall, the harm that would occur justifies dismissing the two-storey extension and therefore this part of the proposal does not glean support from Policy DM1 of the DMP.

15. In addition to the standard commencement condition, it is necessary in order to protect the character and appearance of the area to ensure the acceptable elements of the proposal are finished in appropriate materials and in accordance with the submitted drawings.

**Conclusion**

16. The two-storey extension would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Accordingly, for the reasons given, this part of the proposal should not succeed. The single storey side extension and outbuilding would adhere to the development plan and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Therefore, these elements of the scheme should succeed.

*Graham Chamberlain*
INSPECTOR