The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 14 July 2021

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/D/21/3272526
12 Watts Road, Tavistock PL19 8LF

- 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 S & P Symons against the decision of West Devon Borough Council.
- The application Ref 1846/20/HHO, dated 16 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 12 January 2021.
- The development proposed is demolition of stone garden wall and creation of single-storey kitchen extension. Widening of drive entrance.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 20 July 2021, during the appeal process, the Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Both parties have had an opportunity to comment on the revisions where they may be relevant to the case, and any comments received have been taken into account in determining the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the Tavistock Conservation Area and the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site.

Reasons

4. The statutory duty set out in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

5. The Tavistock Conservation Area (TCA) covers a large area of the town, which sits in a valley surrounded by a steeply sloping landscape. The primary influences for the development of the area include the constraints of its valley setting, the development of the Benedictine Abbey, the industrial heritage of tin and copper mining, foundries, wool production and quarrying and the impact of the patronage of the Bedford Estate, to which much of the high quality 19th century townscape can be attributed. Dartmoor granite and local Hurdwick stone is used for many buildings and other features such as pavements.

6. The appeal site is within the Watts Road, Glanville Road and Tavistock Hospital character area. This area was developed from the mid-19th century into an area of spacious residential suburbs with good examples of Italianate paired villas set in large gardens. The landscape setting, surviving buildings from its various influences and significant 19th century development, including that at Watts Road, are all positive contributors to the character and appearance of the TCA.

7. The appeal building is a large paired villa that is not in the Italianate style. It has formal proportions and simple detailing. Like its neighbours along this stretch of the road its main elevations are to the side and away from the road. It sits behind a high stone wall that encloses a space that has the appearance of a back yard or service area, which again is in common with nearby properties.

8. The proposal would see an extension added to the road facing elevation of the building, within the current yard. It would include a lean-to element that would extend the Kitchen towards the road. On the basis that this face of the existing building does not present itself as a front elevation I consider the addition of this element, with its simple form and scale, to be an acceptable addition. Windows at either end would have a vertical emphasis that would relate well to the proportions of the building's existing openings. The area of roof glazing, although large, would be divided into well proportioned panels and integrated into the roof slope as an area of patent glazing.

9. A low flat roofed element would be appended to the outer edge of the lean-to. I note that there are many examples of flat roofed extensions in the area, including the entrance porch at the appeal property, and a well detailed flat roof need not be inappropriate as a matter of principle. However, the flat roof part would appear as a rather clumsy addition along the edge of the neat form of the lean-to. Its low roof level relative to the door height would lack the finesse of the flat roof over the entrance porch. It would also be let down by the high level window facing the road, which would be easily seen from the road and would be at odds with the strong vertical emphasis of the building's existing openings.

10. I accept that this is a service area fronting the road, which is an unusual arrangement, and that there are a range of extensions nearby that have been carried out in such areas, some more successful than others. The area of the appeal site is however currently undeveloped with limited physical constraints. Therefore, the opportunity exists to extend in a manner that wholly preserves the character and appearance of the TCA, and not one that is influenced by the presence of existing nearby extensions that have a harmful impact on the appearance of the streetscene.

11. It would be easy to view the extension from the road through the enlarged entrance and over the lower part of the boundary wall. It would also be possible to look down towards the extension from the rising level of the access road opposite. Thus, its poor form and fenestration would have a harmful impact on the streetscene.

12. The proposal would see the loss of a lateral external stone wall to which the Council has raised concern. It may be the remnant of a former outbuilding, however in its current state it would appear to be of limited significance, particularly as the head of the wall falls in height towards the house in a rather unfinished manner, without any coping. In this respect it is quite different to

the formal appearance of the other walls with their flat coping stones, which are better suited to the appearance of the house. I am therefore not of the view that this element of the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the TCA.

13. Further concern has been expressed regarding the loss of part of the existing external wall of the house to extend the Kitchen. When considered as part of the proposal this would constitute the demolition of a length of what would become an internal wall. I am not satisfied that this could harm the character or appearance of the TCA.

14. Although the appellants are of the view that the entrance works do not require planning permission, they do form part of the proposal and I note that the Council has not objected to the relocation of the pier. In the event that the appeal is allowed a suitably worded condition could be imposed to secure further details of the gate to ensure that it is designed to respect the formal appearance of the boundary and in particular the fine detailing of the piers that it would sit between.

15. The boundary of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site (WHS) is drawn to include much of historic Tavistock. There is no evidence to definitively tie the development of Watts Road with the mining boom. However, fine town houses and villas within the WHS are likely to contribute to 'mining settlements and social infrastructure' and 'great houses, estates and gardens', which are attributes set out in the WHS Management Plan 2020-2025 (WHSMP) that physically express the outstanding universal value of the WHS.

16. The appellants have drawn my attention to a recent grant of planning permission at 31 Glanville Road[1], which is close to the appeal site and within the same character area of the TCA. However, this dwelling has a more conventional relationship with the road and the proposal relates to areas of the rear of the building, and where visible at the side the alterations would be set well back from the principal elevations of the building and the road. For these reasons this proposal has little in common with the appeal proposal and does not cause me to come to a different conclusion on its merits.

17. In terms of the Framework, the harm identified would be less than substantial. With reference to paragraph 202 of the Framework the proposal would solely be of benefit to the occupiers of the existing dwelling. Therefore, there are no public benefits that would outweigh the degree of harm identified.

18. In summary, the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the TCA and cause harm to the WHS. It would thus fail to meet the requirements of the LBCA and would not accord with Policies SPT1, SPT2, SPT11, DEV20, DEV21, DEV22 and DEV23 of the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-2034 (JLP), and Policies P3 and C2 of the WHSMP, that amongst other things seek to ensure that development proposals are well designed, conserving or enhancing the historic environment and townscape character.

19. The Council has included Policies SPT12 and SPT2 of the JLP within its reason for refusal. Policy SPT12 appears to relate solely to the natural environment.

[1] Council Ref: 2672/20/HHO

The appeal site is within the urban area of Tavistock and the proposal is of a scale that would not have an impact on the wider landscape. Policy SPT2 of the JLP relates solely to the creation of neighbourhoods and communities, which the proposal would not facilitate. I am therefore of the view that neither Policy is relevant to the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

20. There are no material considerations that indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR