
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 July 2021

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/U1105/Y/21/3271260

Old School House, Cotleigh, Honiton EX14 9HJ

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr R Hawley against the decision of East Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/2074/LBC, dated 25 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 December 2020.
 - The works proposed are described as demolition of existing conservatory and construction of two storey rear extension including installation of solar panels, part glazed veranda, insertion of 1 no. first floor window to north elevation and internal alterations to the existing house including creation of new door opening to kitchen and removal of existing door on south elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application which is the subject of this appeal was for listed building consent. When assessed by the Council it was accompanied by a planning application. Both applications were refused. The appellant however indicates that the time limit for appealing the planning application was missed, and therefore this appeal has been lodged alone. Were the appeal to be allowed it would grant listed building consent only. The acceptability of the scheme in relation to planning permission lies beyond its scope.
3. A revised description was agreed between the parties during the Council's determination of the application. This is reproduced above. The appellant has however submitted a revised plan with the appeal which omits the proposed door into the kitchen. The Council has provided no indication of whether it considers this to be acceptable, but the opportunity to provide comment was nonetheless available. I am therefore satisfied that the interests of no party would be prejudiced by determining the appeal on the basis of the revised plan.
4. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published during the course of the appeal. The parties were given the opportunity to comment on the relevance of any changes, and I have taken any comments into account in determining the appeal.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the scheme would preserve a Grade II listed building, or any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

6. Old School House is a Grade II listed building, and therefore a designated heritage asset. Whilst the Act sets out the desirability of preserving the special interest of listed buildings, paragraph 199 of the Framework otherwise makes clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.
7. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal, the special interest and significance of the listed building resides in the original street fronting range, which is dated 1870, and was constructed as a schoolhouse to accommodate a teacher. It has a simple and very modest rectilinear form, constructed from local materials, and embellished with decorative details. The former school with which the schoolhouse was once associated, appears to be located opposite. It is unclear whether the latter is itself listed. A large extension which was attached to the rear of the former schoolhouse prior to its listing, partly obscures the rear elevation, however the front and gables remain fully exposed.
8. The addition of the existing rear extension almost doubled the footprint of the building. It was subsequently enlarged further still by the addition of a conservatory. Viewed from the rear, the footprint and massing of these additions detract from appreciation of the simplicity and modest form of the former schoolhouse.
9. The appeal scheme would see the addition of a further 2-storey extension in place of the conservatory. The footprint, scale, mass and positioning of this extension would mirror that of the former schoolhouse. The roughly symmetrical 'C' shaped building form thus created would have its 2 projecting wings linked across the centre by a veranda.
10. Addition of the proposed extension would fundamentally tip the balance between the original building and modern extensions, with the latter becoming clearly dominant. The original part of the building would furthermore be subsumed within the new homogenised form created, which would see it reduced in status to that of a wing. No historic fabric would be lost within the scheme as revised, but the scheme would nonetheless greatly obscure the identity of the former schoolhouse, detracting from its historic modest character.
11. Standing immediately in front of the former schoolhouse the proposed extension would not be visible. However, the listed building is not experienced statically and from a fixed viewpoint. Indeed, from most other angles the extension would be visible, and most particularly so from the access, parking area and garden. From these vantage points the adverse effects of the extension would be clearly apparent.
12. In view of my findings above, the scheme would not preserve the special interest of the listed building, contrary to the expectations of the Act. With reference to the Framework, I find that the harm caused to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial. I attach great weight to this

harm. In accordance with paragraph 202 of the Framework, it is necessary to balance this harm against the public benefits advanced in favour of the scheme.

13. The scheme would provide expanded domestic accommodation for the appellant's household. Insofar as this would be a private rather than public benefit, it attracts no weight.
14. The appellant additionally states that expanding the accommodation would avoid the need to move to a larger house. It is said that such a move would be a location elsewhere, and that this would see loss of the contribution that the appellant's household makes to the social and economic vitality of the village. The extent to which this would or would not be the case is however clearly subject of speculation. More so given that in this scenario the dwelling would be sold to a person or persons whose household might equally contribute towards the social and economic vitality of the village. I cannot therefore attach any weight to this consideration.
15. The extension would be fitted with solar panels which would provide a source of clean energy generation. The broader environmental benefits would clearly be limited, and I have otherwise been provided with no evidence that the extension is a necessary prerequisite for installation of panels at the site. I therefore attach no more than negligible weight to this consideration.
16. The scheme would generate building work. The broader economic benefits of this would however be very small in scale. They therefore again attract negligible weight. The public benefits of the scheme are therefore insufficient to outweigh the harm that it would cause. This provides a clear indication that the appeal should be dismissed.
17. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the scheme would not preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. The scheme would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, and heritage policy set out within the Framework. Whilst the Council additionally cited conflict with Policy EN9 of the East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031, this is drafted in relation to development proposals, and so not strictly relevant.

Other Matters

18. The site is located within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB), within which there is a statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. The dwelling, as extended, would have very limited exposure within the broader landscape, and would not otherwise appear prominent in this regard. That being so, I am satisfied that the natural beauty of the AONB would be conserved. This does not however alter my conclusion in relation to the listed building as set out above.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR