
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 August 2021

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 September 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/D/21/3275937

North Hill Cottage, Howe Chase, Hedingham Road, Halstead, CO9 2QJ

- 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 Ms Sam Cotterill against the decision of Braintree District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01875/HH, dated 11 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is side extension and roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of side extension and roof extension at North Hill Cottage, Howe Chase, Hedingham Road, Halstead, CO9 2QJ, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 20/01875/HH, dated 11 November 2020, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: location plan, PSNHC/13/BLOCK/01, PSNHC/13/EXE/01, PSNHC/13/EXP/01, PSNHC/13/PROP/01B and PSNHC/13/PROP/02A.

Main issue

2. I consider that the main issue in this case is its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Preliminary matter

3. The Council determined the application on the basis of proposed plans and elevations PSNHC/13/PROP/01B and PSNHC/13/PROP/02A. I understand that the appellant has submitted a subsequent application with revised plans omitting the roof element (ref. 21/01407/HH). I have no information as to whether this application has been granted planning permission. I have determined this appeal on the basis of drawings PSNHC/13/PROP/01B and PSNHC/13/PROP/02A.

Reasons

4. North Hill Cottage is a large detached house not far from Halstead, located in what appears as a fairly isolated position in the countryside, separate from, but associated with a small settlement of houses on a private road. It comprises two distinct sections, one the original brick Victorian two storey house of simple form and design and one a large extension designed in 1969 in a very modern style representative of the architecture of that period. It occupies a large plot of land on the edge of open countryside.
5. I understand that the property has been empty for some time. The building is in a poor state of external repair, particularly the 1969 addition. The materials have deteriorated and there is evidence that damage has been caused by vandals. It appears to remain habitable subject to appropriate repair and refurbishment. The site as a whole comprises some woodland and some grassed areas and part of it is heavily overgrown.
6. I consider that the relevant policies in this case include RLP18 and RLP90 of the Adopted Local Plan 2005 (the local plan), which relate to extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside and the layout and design of development. Policy RLP18 requires, among other things, an extension to be in harmony with the setting, compatible with the scale and character of the existing dwelling and the plot on which it stands and subordinate to the existing dwelling in terms of bulk, height, width and position.
7. Also relevant are policies CS5 of the Core Strategy (2011) and SP7 of the Section 1 Local Plan (2021). These relate to the impact of development on the character of the landscape and its sensitivity to change and the importance of responding positively to local character and context.
8. The Council also refers to policies LPP38, LPP50 and LPP55 of the emerging Section 2 of the Draft Local Plan (Section 2). These carry forward similar criteria to those set out in policies RLP18 and RLP90. They are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) and therefore carry some weight in this appeal.
9. The existing building is clearly of two very different architectural styles, with the 1969 element and its large areas of timber and glass the larger and more prominent and the original brick element now appearing more modest in scale. The proposed development would extend partly at ground floor level and partly at first floor level with a projecting element supported by metal columns. I consider that the increase in footprint and floor area resulting from these parts of the proposal would be small in scale in the context of the overall size of the building and would be acceptable in terms of their design and materials.
10. The proposal also includes a new room at roof level which would be constructed with cedar cladding on the southeast elevation and full glazing for most of the remaining elevations to take advantage of views across the countryside. This room would be relatively modest in size in the context of the overall building. It would be set further back from the frontage to the lane than the existing smaller structure on the roof and is likely, therefore, to be partially obscured from ground level view by the height of the wall, and visible only in long views from the lane leading to The Howe.

11. I consider that the design, size and overall bulk of all parts of the proposal would be compatible with the existing building and that the use of cedar cladding would reflect the character and appearance of the existing cladding and would be in harmony with the surrounding rural landscape. Local plan policy RLP18 refers to *existing buildings*, not the *original building*. Although the original building is clearly the brick built house, the much larger 1969 addition is the more dominant element of the building. As it is now more than 50 years old, I consider that the existing dwelling is well established in the landscape. It has a dual character, with the larger part predominantly modern, albeit in a style very much of its time, and the traditionally Victorian element now somewhat subservient.
12. The proposed extensions, including the roof element, would be compatible with the modern character of the existing dwelling. They amount to relatively modest additions in proportion to the dwelling as a whole. The proposed cedar cladding would weather and over time would harmonise with the surrounding landscape and woodland. The proposal would also bring back into beneficial use a building with a long established presence in the landscape and bring it up to modern living standards with the use of more sustainable building materials.
13. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the dwelling itself or the wider area and that it is consistent with local plan policies RLP18 and RLP90, Core Strategy policy CS5, policy SP7 of the Section 1 Plan and the Framework.
14. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

Conditions

15. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council, having regard to the tests set out in the Framework. A condition detailing the plans is necessary to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and for the avoidance of doubt. The existing materials are varied and in some respects, outdated. The submitted plans show the proposed materials and I consider that the condition requiring the materials to match the existing is not necessary since the condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the plans is sufficient to control that aspect of the development.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR