



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 3 August 2021

by Paul Martinson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/21/3275175

23 Ladbroke Street, Amble NE65 0AS

- 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 Stephen Day against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 20/04234/FUL, dated 10 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'two storey side extension and demolition of existing garage'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Amble Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is one of a pair of rendered semi-detached dwellings located close to the junction of Ladbroke Street with Harbour Road. Ladbroke Street is a residential street consisting of predominantly stone-faced terraced housing fronting the street to one side and predominantly rendered terraced housing set back behind small front gardens to the other. In contrast to the enclosed nature of Ladbroke Street, Harbour Road is much more open with development limited to the south side allowing for views across a large area of open space towards the sea. The open space is grassed with a beach and harbour beyond. Some of the open space is used for car parking with a car park immediately opposite the appeal site.
4. The appeal site and its attached neighbour, 21 Ladbroke Street, are closely aligned with the immediately adjacent terraced row. Due to the narrow gap between No 21 and this terrace, the pair of semi-detached dwellings appear continuous with it. In views from the open space to the north, the appeal property forms a clear end to the linear development along this side of Ladbroke Street. Due to the open nature of the grassed area and the harbour beyond, I saw that the gable is widely visible in views from numerous locations across this area. I also saw that the gable was one of a number of blank gables marking the end of similar rows of properties that can be viewed alongside one another when looking towards the site from the pier to the north.

5. Despite the differing ages of the dwellings along Harbour Road and Ladbroke Street, I saw a degree of consistency within the streetscene. As is noted in the Amble Conservation Area and Character Appraisal (2008) terraced rows are the predominant domestic building form in the CA. The linear arrangement of these dwellings, their simple appearance and modest scale, with regular arrangement of fenestration and blank gables are consistent features of the built form in the vicinity of the appeal site. These features contribute to the significance of the CA. Whilst there is a small first floor window to the gable of the appeal property and a single storey flat roofed garage, the appearance of the gable is overwhelmingly solid and as such it reinforces the significance of the CA identified above.
6. The two-storey side extension would be constructed against the existing gable and would project out considerably further to the side of the property than the attached garage that it would replace. The roof of the dwelling would be continued over the extension without any break or step so that the roof planes of the extension would be flush with those of the existing dwelling. This approach would elongate the appearance of the appeal property in close range views along Harbour Road and Ladbroke Street, significantly increasing its massing and its dominance within the streetscene.
7. The provision of large areas of glazing for the full height of the gable and above the level of the eaves would draw the eye, increasing the prominence of the dwelling in the public views from the north, referred to above. Alongside the increase in massing and projection towards the boundary of the site, the large areas of glazing would appear discordant and at odds with the predominantly blank gables and simple modestly sized dwellings that characterise the area. Whilst the use of boarding and large areas of glazing may be similar to that of the Harbour Office development referred to by the appellant, it is not a design feature that characterises the CA, nor is it present on the adjacent rows of terraced dwellings. Furthermore, the Harbour Office, which is currently under construction, is a standalone non-domestic building that is not within the immediate vicinity of the site. For these reasons and those above, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the streetscene and would thereby fail to preserve or enhance the CA. Nevertheless, the harm would be less than substantial and in accordance with paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('The Framework'), that harm should be weighed against any public benefits of the proposal.
8. There may be benefit to the appearance of the building through providing a new render. The improved surveillance of the adjacent car park, improving energy efficiency of the dwelling and the opportunity to facilitate homeworking could also be considered to be benefits of the proposal. However, taken together these comparatively minor benefits would not be outweighed by the significant harm to the character and appearance of the CA that I have found above.
9. I also note that there would be benefits for the appellant with regard to improved property value, improved internal arrangements, potential for reduced maintenance and the meeting of a possible future need for a downstairs bedroom. However, these are essentially personal benefits that would not be outweighed by the significant public harm to the CA that I have identified above.

10. The appellant argues that a benefit of the proposal would be that the use of modern materials and contemporary design would demonstrate an investment and regeneration of the area. Whilst that may be the case, I am not convinced that the proposal in its submitted form is the only way to achieve this aim.
11. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the Amble Conservation Area. Although I accept that in many ways the proposal would adhere with the criteria set in Policy BE8 and Appendix B of the Alnwick Local Plan (1997), it would nevertheless be contrary to Policies S15 and S16 of the Alnwick Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2007) which seek, amongst other things, to conserve heritage assets and local distinctiveness and provide high quality design. The proposal would also conflict with paragraph 199 of the Framework insofar as it seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has referred to several different developments and planning approvals nearby. I have not been provided with the full details of these or the circumstances that led to them being approved and therefore I cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel with the appeal scheme. Nonetheless I have assessed the appeal on its own merits.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Martinson

INSPECTOR