



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 July 2021

by David Cross BA(Hons) PgDip(Dist) TechIOA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/21/3273255

2 Sandridge, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea NE64 6DX

- 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 Kevin Brown against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 19/04883/FUL, dated 4 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing garage to be replaced with two-storey dwelling house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 20 July 2021, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Both main parties were given the opportunity to comment on the revised Framework and I have had regard to any comments made. I have determined this appeal on the basis of the revised Framework.
3. Reference has been made to the emerging Northumberland Local Plan, although the policies of this emerging plan are not included in the Council's reasons for refusal. I have also not been made aware of the extent of unresolved objections to this emerging plan or its degree of consistency with the Framework. On that basis, and due to the stage of the preparation of the emerging Local Plan, I give it little weight and this is not a determinative matter in my consideration of this appeal.

Background and Main Issue

4. The Council's second reason for refusal refers to the absence of a completed planning obligation securing a financial contribution to the Council's Coastal Mitigation Service. Subsequent to the Council's decision, the appellant has provided a completed planning obligation which has been agreed by the Council and which secures a contribution reflecting the figure stated in the Council Officer's report. This obligation meets the tests set out in paragraph 57 of the Framework. The Council's second reason for refusal has therefore been addressed.

5. On that basis, the main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area with due regard to the Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

6. The appeal site includes a single storey garage located to the side of a larger 2-storey building. The CA Character Appraisal (the CA Appraisal) sets out that many of the earliest buildings in the historic village would have been single storey, and that the handful of single storey buildings is an important reminder of the area's modest origins. The appeal site is specifically identified as an example of one of these buildings in the CA Appraisal, and as such is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.
7. The CA contains a number of different character areas, and the appeal site is located within the area identified as the Historic Core. Elements such as building designs, layouts and streetscapes differ between each of these areas, and contribute to the appreciation of the historic development of the village, and in turn contribute to the importance of the CA as a designated heritage asset.
8. The Heritage Assessment submitted by the appellant acknowledges that many of the earliest buildings in the CA might have been single storey. However, the appeal site is not one of the earliest buildings, and the evidence suggests that it dates from the mid-19th century. Two-storey buildings would have been the most common form of building at that time, and this is the predominant built form in this part of the CA.
9. However, there are some single storey buildings which remain in the village. Whilst these may not be the earliest examples and may have been significantly altered, as is the case with the appeal site, this form of building represents an indication of the historic development of the village. The single storey buildings I observed in the area contrast with the predominant 2-story built form, and as such contribute to the distinct character of this part of the CA and the appreciation of the CA as a whole.
10. Within the context of the predominant 2-storey built form in this area of the CA, the scarcity of single storey buildings adds to their importance. Although the appeal building is of a utilitarian and understated appearance, the simplicity of its design and limited scale make a positive contribution to the mix of buildings within the streetscape.
11. The appeal proposal would replace the single storey garage with a new dwelling. Although the replacement building could be more correctly described as 1.5 storey, with rooms in the roofspace served by a gable window and rooflights, it would be of a greater scale and of a more overtly residential character than the building it would replace. Whilst the proposal would have a lower ridge height than the adjacent dwelling and would use traditional materials, this would not successfully replicate the contribution that the current appeal site makes to the CA. The change in the appearance of the site from a modest single storey building to a dwelling of an increased scale would diminish the contribution that the site makes to the appreciation of the CA.
12. The proposal would also result in the loss of a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). The building is not one of the earliest examples of this form of building

in the CA, and has also been altered. However, due to the scarcity of this form of building, these considerations do not completely negate the heritage importance of this building.

13. The appellant submits that the proposal would only affect a very small area within the wider CA. However, given the scarcity of single storey buildings of this nature and their importance to the appreciation of the CA as a whole, I consider that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
14. The appellant refers to development elsewhere in the area where the Council did not require the replacement buildings to be of a scale or to replicate preceding buildings on the site. However, I have not been given full details of those developments to determine if they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal, particularly in respect of the scarcity or significance of the buildings that were replaced. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its individual merits.
15. I am mindful of the benefits arising from the proposal. The proposal would be located on previously developed land and would contribute to the supply of housing in this sustainable settlement. The spend generated by residents of the scheme would also support services and businesses in the area. However, the contribution arising from a single dwelling would be very limited. It is proposed to include both bat and bird boxes within the scheme, although given the scale of the proposal the benefit to local biodiversity would be very limited.
16. I have also had regard to the structural defects identified by the appellant and supporting evidence. However, whilst these may justify the demolition of the original building, I am not persuaded that it is only a building of the scale and nature of that proposed that is economically viable. Structural integrity therefore carries very limited weight in favour of the demolition of the building and its replacement with a building of the design proposed.
17. Due to the loss of the single storey building, and its replacement with a building which does not reflect the contribution that the original building makes to the appreciation of the CA, I conclude that the proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Whilst the harm to the CA would be less than substantial, this does not diminish the great weight I give to that harm and the conservation of the CA as a designated heritage asset. Due to the scarcity of buildings of this scale and nature, the loss of this NDHA also weighs against the proposal; although as the building is not an early example and has been altered, then this carries only moderate weight against the proposal. The limited public benefits arising from the appeal proposal would not outweigh the identified harm to the CA as a designated heritage asset, or indeed the loss of the NDHA.
18. The proposal would therefore be contrary to policy GP18 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan 2007 which seeks to preserve or enhance the special architectural or historic interest of the CA. Whilst that policy does not refer to the consideration of the degree of harm or public benefits, this does not negate my conclusions on the proposal or the conflict with the development plan. The proposal would also be contrary to the Framework in respect of conserving and enhancing the historic environment, including the consideration of potential impacts on non-designated and designated heritage assets. The proposal would

also be contrary to the advice of the CA Appraisal with regards to consideration of the character of the CA and buildings of importance.

19. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR