
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2021

by Robert Parker BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/21/3277697

May Cottage, Glue Hill, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 2DJ

- 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 Mike Read against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/FUL/2020/00225, dated 29 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 29 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is alterations and extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - a) whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Sturminster Newton Conservation Area; and
 - b) the effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, with reference to privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. May Cottage lies within the Sturminster Newton Conservation Area (CA) and is visible from a public footpath at the front of the site. The property is relatively modern and resembles a bungalow with a two-storey addition at one end, both parts constructed of reconstituted stone under a concrete tile roof. The design is functional rather than attractive, and contrasts markedly with the traditional cottages on Glue Hill and Hole House Lane. The dwelling does not make a positive contribution to the CA, but at the same time its innocuous design does not detract significantly from the character and appearance of the area.
4. The proposal is to remodel the dwelling by extending the bungalow element upwards to provide an additional storey, with single-storey extensions front and rear. The roofs of the latter would create balconies, edged by glass balustrading. The existing dual-pitched roofs would be replaced by a pair of opposing mono-pitched roofs of differing heights. The walls of the entire dwelling would be clad in vertical timber boards above render at ground floor.

5. The resulting building would have substantially greater mass and bulk, and the tallest mono-pitch roof would be both striking and dominant. The design is far removed from other forms of development within the CA, both historic and more modern. In that respect, the proposals would not preserve the character or appearance of this designated heritage asset.
6. I accept that the intention was not to replicate the local vernacular. There is scope for a contemporary design to enhance the appearance of the existing building. However, in my judgement the proposal does not demonstrate a sufficiently high standard of design to justify granting planning permission. The different roof elements would break up the mass to some degree, but the elongated horizontal form and high mono-pitch roof would combine to create a building of excessive scale and undue prominence. The use of render and timber cladding throughout provides consistency but does not assist in modulating the design. Furthermore, the modern design aspiration does not follow through into the fenestration which is conventional and humdrum.
7. The appellant draws parallels with Mill Cottage on nearby Stalbridge Lane but that dwelling has a unique scale, form and use of materials. The appeal scheme is not directly comparable and therefore I have considered it on its merits.
8. I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Sturminster Newton Conservation Area. There would be conflict with Policy 24 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016) (LP) insofar as it seeks to ensure that development is designed to improve the character and quality of the area within which it is located.
9. There would also be conflict with the heritage objectives of LP Policy 5. This policy mirrors the National Planning Policy Framework in stating that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The scheme would not improve the appearance of the building and therefore there are no public benefits to outweigh the harm.

Living conditions

10. The Council contends that the proposed balcony and glazed openings on the southern elevation of May Cottage would provide opportunities for overlooking of adjoining properties. The occupiers of Hillcrest House have requested the removal of the front balcony from the scheme on the basis that it would adversely affect privacy within their garden and master bedroom. Whilst this is a legitimate concern, it could be addressed by imposing a planning condition to require the installation of an obscurely glazed vision screen at the western end of the balcony. This would prevent casual overlooking and restrict direct views of the neighbours.
11. The only other dwelling that could potentially be affected by overlooking from the balcony and first floor windows is Spring Cottage to the south. However, this property is sufficiently far away to ensure that there would not be an unacceptable loss of privacy.
12. Accordingly, I conclude that there would be no conflict with LP Policy 25 insofar as it seeks to protect the privacy of neighbouring properties.

Conclusion

13. The proposal would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, but it would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Sturminster Newton Conservation Area. For this reason, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Parker

INSPECTOR