



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 January 2022

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/21/3284854

Crook Hill Cottage, Crook Hill, Netherbury DT6 5LY

- 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 Nick Supple against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/HOU/2021/00501, dated 20 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 23 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is internal remodelling and two-storey extension with alterations to existing entrance.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building, and whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Netherbury Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Crook Hill Cottage is a two-storey house that lies on the north-eastern edge of the village of Netherbury, close to a right-angle bend in the road which leads down into the main part of the settlement. It is a long, narrow dwelling, sitting in a spacious garden, and probably results from the amalgamation of two mid-19th century cottages in the past. It is primarily of stone construction, with brick detailing over the timber-framed windows. It has a slate roof, with brick chimney stacks. Overall, there has been little in the way of modern intervention to compromise its original character and appearance. Consequently, it sits comfortably in its semi-rural location on the edge of a village that is made up, predominantly, of historic buildings.
4. The building lies within the Netherbury Conservation Area (the CA). The significance of the CA lies in its landscape setting; the mature trees within the village; its high proportion of historic buildings; and its distinctive local building materials and traditions, which give it a strong sense of place. The Netherbury and Broadwindsor Conservation Area Appraisal (the CA Appraisal) designates Crook Hill Cottage as an Important Local Building, and identifies that it has group value with Shepherds Crook, which lies immediately to the southwest. On this basis, it is not disputed that Crook Hill Cottage is a non-designated heritage asset. Its largely unspoilt historic character, and use of traditional local materials, means that it makes a positive contribution to the significance of the CA.

5. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. Furthermore, paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) says that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account. In weighing proposals that affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss, and the significance of the heritage asset.
6. The proposed two-storey extension would replace an existing single-storey lean-to on the northeast elevation. The appellant contends that the lean-to is a detrimental addition, and that its removal will reveal the historic evolution of the building. However, the lean-to meets the main building below eaves level, so the roof of the original cottage is unbroken. The addition is also set slightly back from the front elevation and is built in matching stone and slate. Consequently, it is a subservient addition, leaving the form of the original cottage readily discernible.
7. By contrast, the eaves and ridges of the proposed twin-gabled extension would be at the same height as those of the existing dwelling. It would, therefore, conceal a substantial proportion of the original roof. As the central valley would be at a higher level than the original eaves, the twin gables would be visually conjoined, to become a single expanse of building, stretching across a considerable part of the elevation. The scale of the extension would be further emphasised by the large expanse of vertical boarding extending up into the gables, resulting in a bulky appearance. Consequently, although the ridges of the extension would be considerably shorter than the ridgeline of the main building, the proposal would, nevertheless, be a dominant addition, that would detract from the original form and character of the building.
8. The dominant impact of the extension on the character of the original dwelling would be exacerbated by its detailed design. The horizontal emphasis of the proposed window openings would be at odds with the verticality of those in the existing building, and that are prevalent throughout the CA. Furthermore, the offset positioning of the windows, that effectively wraparound the corners of the extension, would be out of keeping with the traditional arrangement on the main building. Combined with the expansive use of vertical timber boarding, the resultant appearance would be of a rather lightweight, contemporary structure, that would not sit comfortably in the context of the more robust, traditional character of the host building and the CA in general.
9. The appellant contends that visibility of the building is restricted, so the contribution that it makes to the significance of the CA is limited to its roadside gable. However, the proposed extension would be very readily visible when approaching the village by road from the northeast. From this vantage point, the dwelling is seen at a lower level, with the hillside and traditional buildings within the CA beyond. Whilst this is not a key gateway to the village, as identified in the CA Appraisal, the building is the first one that is encountered when arriving in the settlement via this route. The timber-clad, twin-gabled extension would be a prominent feature at the entrance to the CA, and would significantly diminish the contribution that the existing house makes to the significance of the heritage asset.

10. I therefore find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the non-designated heritage asset. This would result in a diminution of the positive contribution it makes to the significance of the CA. Consequently, the development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the heritage asset.
11. The extension would only be visible from the stretch of road leading into the village, and past the site, from the northeast. Consequently, the harm to the CA would be limited to this area, so would be less than substantial for the purposes of paragraph 199 of the Framework. That does not mean that less than substantial weight should be afforded to the harm. Paragraphs 199 and 200 state that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and that any harm to, or loss of, its significance should require clear and convincing justification.
12. Paragraph 202 requires that, where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this regard, I note that the overall alterations would improve Building Regulations compliance, and the energy efficiency of the building. This would be a significant public benefit, but it has not been demonstrated that the same result could not be achieved in a manner that would preserve the heritage asset. Indeed, I note that planning permission has subsequently been granted¹ for a proposal that would result in a similar internal layout, but which would be less dominant, and more respectful of its context, in its external form and design. I therefore give this benefit limited weight. Consequently, it does not outweigh the great weight that the Framework gives to the conservation of heritage assets.
13. For the reasons given, the proposal would be damaging to the character and appearance of the non-designated heritage asset, and would result in less than substantial harm to the CA. This harm is not outweighed by public benefits. The development would, therefore, be contrary to Policies ENV4, ENV10, ENV12 and HOUS6 of the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (Adopted 2015). These Policies seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets; secure high-quality design that maintains local identity and distinctiveness; and ensure that extensions do not harm the character of an existing dwelling and its locality. The proposal would also be contrary to the Framework's aim to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Conclusion

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

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR

¹ LPA Reference: P/HOU/2021/03513