



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 April 2022

by Jonathan Manning BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13TH May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/21/3288950

High Thatch, Blandford Road, Corfe Mullen, BH21 3HJ

- 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 Charles Gardner against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref 3/20/1950/FUL, dated 28 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is sever part of garden land associated with High Thatch and erect two storey dwelling and detached garage, new access driveway and turning area.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues of the appeal are whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of High Thatch, which is a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located on Blandford Road and falls within the Brog Street/Sleight Lane Conservation Area (the CA). At present the site forms part of the garden area of High Thatch, which is a two-storey dwelling. I observed on my site visit that the CA is largely rural in nature with scattered dwellings along Brog Street and Sleight Lane of differing age, scale and character. It was also evident that the appeal site sits in an elevated and prominent position, particularly when approaching from the west along the B3074. A public right of way (PROW) runs along the northern boundary of the appeal site.
4. The proposal seeks to sever part of the garden area of High Thatch and erect a detached dwelling, detached garage and a new access, driveway and turning area. The proposed dwelling would have a thatched roof front elevation that would not be dissimilar to that of the dwelling which used to be present on the site, as is clearly evident from the photo in the

Council's officer report. The proposed dwelling would have a rear wing that would create an L shaped footprint.

5. Whilst the CA accommodates a mix of dwelling types, layouts and architectural styles, it was evident that the majority of dwellings have their principle elevations facing onto the highway and any additions appear to be subservient to the main dwelling.
6. As it faces onto the highway in a similar manner to most other dwellings in the CA, the thatched roof part of the proposed dwelling should be the main focal point. However, the proposed rear wing of the dwelling would be similar in height, scale and footprint to that of the front thatched roof part of the scheme and would compete for dominance. I consider that this creates an awkward design that would appear incongruous and out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area.
7. The appellant has provided a visibility study as part of his appeal submissions and is of the view that the rear wing would not be overly visible in the street scene. I accept that this would be the case when stood directly in front of the proposed dwelling. However, the rear wing would be particularly evident from the PROW that runs along the northern boundary and there can be no guarantees that new planting would screen all views. Further and despite the existing vegetation and change in levels, I consider that some glimpsed views would be available from Blandford Road and Brog Street. It would therefore not be inconspicuous in the street scene and public views.
8. The appellant notes that the ridge height of the rear wing could easily be reduced by 150mm. However, I have no drawings to illustrate how this would be achieved. In any event, it is a combination of the height and length/footprint of the rear wing that is of concern and I am not satisfied that such a minor reduction would be sufficient to address my concerns.
9. I acknowledge that the rear wing has been reduced by around 2 metres in length from the previously refused planning application and that dormer windows have now been substituted with rooflights to reduce clutter on the roofscape of the rear wing. Nonetheless, I must consider this scheme on its merits and for the reasons given above, the proposal by virtue of its design, scale/mass and layout would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Given the limited size of the scheme, the harm caused to the CA, as a whole, would be less than substantial.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (the NPPF) at Paragraph 202 advises that where less than substantial harm would occur to a heritage asset, the public benefits of the scheme should be weighed against the harm. I consider that the delivery of one dwelling towards the Council's housing land supply does not outweigh the identified harm. The scheme is therefore contrary to Policies HE1, HE2 and HE3 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan - Part 1 Core Strategy, 2014.

High Thatch

11. The appellant does not dispute that High Thatch is a non-designated heritage asset. It was clear from my site visit that the large garden area of High Thatch contributes positively to its setting and consequently, its significance.
12. The NPPF sets out that in weighing applications 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.
13. I am not of the view that the presence of a new dwelling in the garden area of High Thatch would cause unacceptable harm to its significance, if of an appropriate scale and design, given the past presence of a dwelling. Notwithstanding this and again despite the existing vegetation and level differences the incongruous and harmful design, scale/mass and layout of the proposal would be evident from High Thatch and its immediate garden area. This would cause harm to the setting of High Thatch and its significance. Whilst such harm would be relatively low, it nonetheless weighs further against the scheme, which is contrary to Paragraph 203 of the NPPF.
14. The appellant has considered the evolution of High Thatch and its own extension/additions in some detail. However, such matters do not affect my conclusions above.

Other Matters

15. Interested parties have raised numerous other concerns. However, I am dismissing the appeal on other grounds and therefore such matters do not affect my overall conclusion. Consequently, there is no need for me to consider these matters any further.
16. The appellant has set out that he is seeking to provide a scheme to better meet contemporary lifestyles in terms of the living space. However, whilst noted, I am not of the view that this matter outweighs the identified harm.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the scheme runs contrary to the development plan when it is considered as a whole, and there are no material considerations to indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan should be taken. I therefore conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Jonathan Manning

INSPECTOR