
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 August 2022

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/22/3291940

18 Dorchester Road, Maiden Newton, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 0BA

- 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 Morris against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/HOU/2021/03664, dated 1 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of the development as set out above is taken from the application form, albeit the drawings depict both a proposed front porch and also a single storey rear extension. The appellant has referred to the rear extension as permitted development, and the Council have considered the application solely with regard to the porch. The appeal has been submitted against the refusal of consent for the porch, and I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.
3. 18 Dorchester Road (No 18) is within the Maiden Newton Conservation Area. As required by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) I have paid special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
4. From the evidence provided by the main parties, the boundary of the conservation area runs along the front elevation of the terrace of houses of which No 18 forms part, and the appellant considers the proposed porch would be outside the conservation area. As the house is within this designated heritage asset, I have had regard to the impact of the porch upon the conservation area and its setting.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed porch on the character and appearance of the host building, and linked to that, whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

6. The appeal property is part of a terrace of houses that form a long line to the northern side of Dorchester Road. A repeated feature of this road is the presence of several long, terraced rows of historic buildings that create a defined enclosure of the public realm. The buildings are close to the public highway, and although a few have small front gardens, the overall impression is one whereby the buildings create a deliberate delineation and enclosure of the road. Architectural details within the historic properties vary, but many of the terraces, such as that which includes the appeal property, have a simple appearance with flat façades, similar materials, and repeated patterns and sizes of window and door openings. The presence of the historic terraces, the high quality of the buildings, and their deliberate enclosure of the public highway, are all part of the significance of the conservation area.
7. The essentially homogenous appearance of the terrace of which the appeal property forms part, along with the position close to the highway, is such that it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Although not identical, the houses within the terrace have a number of similarities, including sizes, heights, and materials. The houses have a simple style, with similar fenestration and front door positioning and sizes, and some have retained their recessed front doors under arched headers. Whilst No 18 and its adjoining neighbour 20 Dorchester Road (No 20) are set back from the front elevation of the other houses in the terrace and have a hipped roof, as they harmonise with the size, height, materials, and detailing of the other houses in the terrace, they form an integral and complementary part of the row. Some of the houses have been modified, including with front door porches, but the terrace retains its historic, unified appearance, with the houses enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.
8. The proposed porch would be similar in size and appearance to those present elsewhere on the terrace, and like these others, it would conceal the recessed front door under its arched porch. As such the porch would remove one of the integral architectural details of the house that contributes to the historic homogeneity of the terrace. The projection of the porch beyond the front elevation of the house would harmfully detract from the simple, repeated plain form of the terrace. Nos 18 and 20 are set back from the other houses in the terrace, and the porch would be of modest dimensions. However, as the porch would introduce an extension upon the front of the building, it would harmfully interrupt the unity of the façade of the terrace.
9. In addition, the porch would intrude into the open setting of the terrace and the conservation area that derives from the shallow front gardens and the presence of the public highway. Given the more open, sporadic nature of development to the south of Dorchester Road, this long terrace forms a prominent feature. There are long views of the terrace from the surrounding area, and these views exaggerate the prominence of the terrace and the contribution it makes to the conservation area. Even though the porch would be of modest dimensions, it would appear harmfully disruptive within this context.
10. Two of the houses within the row have similar sized and styled porches to that proposed, with another house having a front door canopy. These properties

are centrally located within the terrace, and they form a discrete group. The houses either side of this group have retained their recessed front doors, and the arched headers and porches are a deliberate element that creates visual interest and relief within the terrace. The recesses provide shadows and focal points within the continuity of the front elevation, and this along with the arched headers, combine to legibly draw attention to the front doors of the houses. The concealment of such a detail at the appeal property would unacceptably detract from the historic homogeneity of the terrace, with the porch giving undue prominence to No 18.

11. Moreover, the end-of-terrace positioning of No 18 is such that when approaching from the east the projection of the porch beyond the front façade and the loss of the existing detailing would appear conspicuously apparent. Whilst there may be no objection to the scheme from local residents, the porch would unacceptably detract from the host building and the harmony of the terrace, thereby eroding elements that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
12. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. This is irrespective of whether any harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Given my findings, the porch would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The harm would be less than substantial as the porch would affect only part of the conservation area, although this harm would be of considerable importance and weight.
13. Under such circumstances, the Framework advises that where development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. An assessment of the public benefits from the scheme has not been undertaken by the appellant, albeit the application was submitted due to the presence of other nearby porches. However, the other porches would not justify additional ones, nor would the porch be needed to secure the optimum viable use for the building.
14. On balance the porch would fail to respect the host building, nor would it preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. This would be contrary to the requirements of the Act and objectives of the Framework, and the conditions suggested by the Council, including those controlling materials, would fail to mitigate the harm. The works would also conflict with Policy ENV4 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015), which seeks, amongst other things that development conserves and enhances the significance of designated heritage assets, thereby reflecting objectives of the Framework.

Other Matters

15. The appeal site lies within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) where there is a duty to conserve its landscape and scenic beauty. Although the porch would harm the conservation area and its setting, given the size of the porch and that it would be seen within the context of a built-up area, it would not significantly harm the wider landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

16. Finally, concerns regarding the Council's handling of the application relate to procedural matters and have no bearing on my consideration of the planning merits of the case.

Conclusion

17. The porch would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host building and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole, and there are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Thus, for the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR