



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October 2022

by R Hitchcock BSc(Hons) DipCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/22/3302592

Willow House, 57 Ostlers Lane, Cheddleton, Staffordshire, ST13 7HS

- 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 Mrs Joanne Johnson against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
 - The application Ref SMD/2022/0019, dated 14 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 26 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is the 'Fitting of agate grey composite cladding to the upper half of the front elevation of the property'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's Decision Notice refers to development which was not described on the planning application form. This relates to the removal of a former bay and addition of a small front extension to the dwelling. For the avoidance of doubt, this lies beyond the description of development for which planning permission was sought. Accordingly, I have considered only the matter of the upper floor cladding as referred to in the planning application and shown on the submitted plans.
3. At the time of my site inspection a development as shown on the appeal plans was substantially complete. I shall therefore deal with the proposal as one under s73A of the Act for development already carried out.
4. The site lies adjacent to, but outside of the Cheddleton Conservation Area (CA). There is no dispute between the main parties that the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Pursuant to the duty under s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, having considered the proposal and visited the site, I concur with that view. This is because the edge of the CA in the vicinity benefits from a high degree of tree coverage providing a visual buffer between the houses set beyond the CA boundary and the southern extent of the CA. Accordingly, it is my view that the development proposed would preserve the character and appearance of the designated area and I shall make no further reference to this matter.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the building and its location.

Reasons

6. The site features a detached 2-storey dwelling set behind an area of hardstanding used for vehicle parking. This is enclosed by hedging and gates. It lies on an inclined access track running parallel to Ostlers Lane which serves a row of houses on its eastern side. The site and track are set above a vegetated embankment containing mature roadside trees.
7. The house has a hipped tiled main roof with an asymmetrical frontage including 3 projecting gables. The side elevations retain original smooth-faced red brick. The frontage has been remodelled with the lower section finished in a smooth painted render. The upper section is clad with textured horizontal composite uPCV boarding described as agate grey in colour. This matches the colour of the front door, garage door, window frames (and reveals), and the gable barge boards. The new render and cladding replace areas of red brick and rendered panels on the upper gabled sections.
8. The site lies towards the higher southern extent of the row of houses. In contrast to the more regular inter-wars semis on the northern section of the lane, the buildings nearby have a higher degree of variety in their age, scale, design and architectural detailing.
9. The differences in the buildings include a variety of material finishes and colours. Along the more consistently designed length of the row to the north, rendered panels are painted in various colours to provide a degree of variation. Elsewhere, individual properties are built in different coloured brickwork revealing their age and complimenting their design. Some have later additions in contrasting materials, however, these tend to appear recessive with subordinate scaling.
10. In combination with the window framing and barge boards, the use of cladding across the entirety of the upper frontage, including a central return wall, results in an unusual monochromatic appearance. The resultant expanse of a single colour appears bold and has largely concealed the architectural detailing of the principal elevation of the original building. It substantially lacks contrasting elements or finer detailing to provide visual interest. This draws the eye and dominates the appearance of the building.
11. Although the appellant asserts that the colour is recessive and muted, it is conspicuous by virtue of its expanse and disparity to the traditional materials on the flanking elevations. Whilst it appears compatible with the lower rendered part of the elevation, the modern material does not harmonise well with the original style of the building or the surrounding traditionally styled and finished development.
12. Despite that the site has a limited degree of prominence and benefits from some screening by hedging and seasonal greenery in the adjacent plot to the north, the effect on the building is stark. Although there is some variety in the colour of brickwork and renders found locally, these are substantially original materials (or authentic replacements) which are faithful to the individual buildings' designs and character. Unlike the cladding, they provide a coherent and consistent appearance of consolidated character.
13. I note an example of similar cladding used at 92 Ostlers Lane. Although there is little to demonstrate that this was carried out with the benefit of planning

permission, it is notable that the cladding is substantially more limited in area. I also acknowledge that other examples of cladding are present on Hillside road and elsewhere, however, these are very much in the minority. Moreover, the existence of development elsewhere does not represent an appropriate reason to find in favour of development that causes harm in this case, or lead me to alter my findings on this issue.

14. For the above reasons, I find that the cladding relates poorly to the original character and appearance of the building and stands out as an incongruous element in the context of local development. It thereby conflicts with Policy DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan [2020] and the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide as they seek and use of materials appropriate to the area to reinforce local distinctiveness and which respect the site and its surroundings.

Other Matters

15. I note that the appellant indicates that the supplier's website concluded that planning permission was not required for the cladding given its location outside of certain designated areas. However, this is not a strong or persuasive argument in favour of the development.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should not be allowed.

R Hitchcock

INSPECTOR