



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 March 2023

by John Felgate BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Decision date: 12 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/F2415/D/22/3308333

Rose Cottage, Manor Road, Bitteswell, Leicestershire LE17 4RZ

- 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 Jason Black against the decision of Harborough District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00904/FUL, dated 14 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 28 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as: *"A single storey extension to connect with the existing outbuildings while maintaining their existing facades, and a small single-storey extension to the northwest side"*.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for the development described above, at Rose Cottage, Manor Road, Bitteswell, Leicestershire LE17 4RZ, in accordance with the application, Ref 22/00904/FUL, dated 14 April 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) All new materials to be used on the external surfaces of the development, other than re-used stone from the existing boundary wall, shall match the materials of the existing building.
 - 3) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

113 Rev.A	Proposed Site Plan
114 Rev.A	Proposed First Floor Plan
115 Rev.A	Proposed Elevations 1
116 Rev.A	Proposed Elevations 2

The proposed development

2. The proposed development comprises two separate elements. The first would be a single-storey extension to the southeast side of the existing house, connecting with two existing outbuildings, which would be converted to living accommodation. Together the new and converted space in this area would form a new kitchen, study, lobby, utility room and cloakroom. The second element, also single storey, would take the form of a bay window extension to the lounge, on the opposite, north-western side of the building. In addition to

these, the proposed scheme also includes a reconfiguration of the existing ground floor space to create an enlarged dining and living room space.

Main issue

3. From the submissions before me, the main issue in the appeal is the effect of the proposed south-eastward extension on the character and appearance of the Bitteswell Conservation Area (the CA).
4. The smaller extension, to the northwest side, is not objected to by the Council or any other party, and I see no reason to disagree.

Reasons for decision

5. On my visit, I saw that Rose Cottage is an attractive, early 19th-century, detached 2-storey house, close to the centre of Bitteswell. The property has entrances from both Manor Road and Lutterworth Road. Manor Road is a small back lane, serving a handful of residential properties and a village hall. Lutterworth Road is the main local road through the village, connecting with the nearby town of Lutterworth and other local villages. On the opposite side of Lutterworth Road stands St Marys Parish Church, which dates from the 13th century and is listed grade II*. At the junction of these two roads is the village green.
6. The Bitteswell CA is centred on the Parish Church and the village green. Its street pattern reflects the village's origins in the medieval period. Amongst the existing buildings are some that survive from the 16th century onwards. The settlement is largely surrounded by farmland, and its historic relationship to this agricultural hinterland is clearly discernible. In the absence of any other evidence, it appears that the CA's special interest lies in its historical and architectural value as an example of an agricultural village typical of this part of Leicestershire.
7. The Council's objections, as expressed in their refusal reason, relate to the design and siting of the proposed development, and its effects on the character of the site, and on views of the Church.
8. The south-eastern extension would be a simple, flat-roofed linear building, with a rectangular plan form, connecting the main dwelling to the two existing outbuilding structures. The longer elevation, fronting Manor Road, is proposed to be constructed mainly in stone reclaimed from the existing boundary wall, and would contain one small slit window and a recessed entrance doorway with narrow glazing panels to either side. This elevation would also be set back behind the line of the main house and the smaller of the two converted outbuildings. The short elevation to Lutterworth Road would be fully glazed, and would be set back to form a deep recess between the main house and the larger outbuilding. The new flat roof would join both outbuildings at a height just above their eaves, but below their ridge lines. The outbuildings would retain their existing red brick facades and slate roofs, with the insertion of one new small window in each.
9. The style and form of the new link building would be quite different from those of the existing house and the other older buildings in the area, being more contemporary in its approach, notably in terms of its roof, built form, fenestration, and materials. However, this approach has the merit of allowing the original buildings, and their subsequent evolution, to remain clearly legible.

The new extension, with its low roof line, recessed position, restrained articulation, and conscious lack of decoration, would be unassertive and clearly subservient, not just to the house itself, but also to the other retained buildings on the site. As such, it seems to me that the proposed development would contribute to a pleasing overall composition, fitting comfortably within its setting. Consequently I find the design acceptable in this location.

10. The area to the side of the house, where the proposed extension would be located, is currently a small paved yard, containing domestic paraphernalia. The development would effectively fill this space, between Rose Cottage and the neighbouring property, Shadow Dawn. However, most of the other nearby buildings, in Manor Road and this part of Lutterworth Road, are built either close together or physically attached. Space between buildings therefore does not appear to be a characteristic feature of this part of the CA. Given that in this case the existing yard at the appeal site is not particularly attractive, and contributes little to the area in its current form, it seems to me that the loss of this space would not cause harm.
11. I have considered carefully the Council's concerns regarding views to the Parish Church. There is no doubt that the Church is an important and attractive building, and a focal point of the CA. I agree that its visibility from a wide range of viewpoints contributes to the CA's interest and significance. But nevertheless, this does not mean that all such views are of equal value. Without question, the most important views are those from the village green and from Lutterworth Road. These would be unaffected by the development now proposed.
12. With regard to the particular view in question, from Manor Road, at present the Church can be seen through the gap between Rose Cottage and Shadow Dawn, albeit partially obscured by foliage. With the development now proposed, the lower part of that view would be lost. However, the existing gap is quite small, and thus for a person walking or moving along the road, even quite slowly, the Church would be seen only briefly. Given the range of other viewpoints available, it seems unlikely that many would stop at this point to take in this particular view. Furthermore, the level of usage on Manor Road is likely to be low. In these circumstances, it seems to me that the view across the appeal site is of no more than minor importance to the CA. And in any event, given the proposed extension's low roofline, the upper parts of the church tower, and the spire, would remain in view.
13. Having regard to all the above considerations, I conclude that the proposed scheme would cause no harm to the Bitteswell CA. Rather, its effect would be neutral, and the CA's character and appearance would thus be preserved. So too would its significance as a heritage asset. The setting of the Church would likewise be unharmed.
14. In all these respects, for the reasons already given, I find that the development would comply with Policy HC1 of the Harborough Local Plan, adopted April 2019, which aims to protect heritage and community assets in accordance with relevant national policy. It would also satisfy Policy GD8, which requires a high standard of design.

Conditions

15. The permission that I shall grant is subject to conditions with regard to materials and compliance with the approved plans. The first of these is needed to ensure a satisfactory appearance. The other is necessary to define the nature of the development, and thus to enable the planning authority to exercise proper control.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, I have concluded that the proposed development complies with the relevant policies of the development plan. No other material considerations have been identified that would point to a decision other than in accordance with those policies. I have taken account of all the matters raised, but none outweighs this conclusion. The appeal is therefore allowed.

J Felgate

INSPECTOR