



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 March 2023

By A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W1850/D/23/3315021

Yatton Cottage, Yatton Leominster Herefordshire HR6 9TP

- 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 Julian Dawes against the decision of Herefordshire Council.
 - The application Ref: P222166/FH dated 30 June 2022 was refused by notice dated 2 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is erection of a single storey extension to provide 3 additional bedrooms, living room, kitchen/dining, utility, boot room, plant room and garage/workshop.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of the proposed development appearing on the Council's decision notice differs from that appearing on the application form however, the appellant has stated the description has not changed. As that description is repeated on the appeal form I have used that description.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area and:
 - whether Yatton Cottage is a non-designated heritage asset and if so, the effect of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Yatton Cottage is a modestly proportioned stone-built cottage in a prominent hillside position above the village of Yatton which is around 500m to the west of the site. The proposed accommodation would be embedded into the sloping hillside topography providing a south-westerly prospect with a 'green' roof and a photovoltaic array together with a parking structure for up to 5 vehicles.
 5. Overall the proposal seeks to minimise visual impact although this can only be partly effective due to the openness of the hillside against which the development would be viewed. The single storey, single aspect, design would incorporate an overhanging roof set on columns and by virtue of the design
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approach, the appellant suggests that views of the proposal would be limited in close views due to its relationship with public footpaths, and present only in distant views. Whilst the effect of recessing the main external wall in this way would be to potentially darken the external wall surfaces in longer views of the site, including expanses of glass, my observations lead me to conclude that the very large, albeit partially concealed, architectural form of what is proposed would be, due to its width and scale, prominently apparent as a hard-edged built insertion into the softly contoured landscape setting of Yatton Cottage. This prominence, even at distance, would be underlined at night, in an area of otherwise dark sky, by the illumination associated with residential occupation.

6. The Ayemestry Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031 (Ayemestry NDP) explains that the area it addresses is of high landscape value derived from its underlying geology, referring also to tranquillity as well as high scenic qualities. Policy AYEnv7 of the Ayemestry NDP requires identified views to be protected and at (a) specifies views to and from Yatton Hill and Croft Ambrey. The related images at [4] both include Yatton Cottage and any reading of this policy would indicate the potential for policy conflict, which my observations confirm. As my reasoning explains, I consider there to be a clear conflict with this important policy of the Ayemestry NDP that should attract significant weight.

Heritage Asset

7. The Council refer to Yatton Cottage as having some heritage interest derived from mention in the 1934 Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (RCHM). No original documentation is provided by the Council but this position is not disputed by the appellant. Even in a subsequently altered condition a building which originates prior to 1714¹ has a degree of significance arising from its survival into modern times as, in this case, an isolated rural dwelling associated with a historic farmstead. Although there is no clear suggestion by either party as to the asset's significance beyond that implied by its inclusion in the RCHM, I consider that Yatton Cottage is a heritage asset as defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework.
8. Policy AYEnv3 of the Ayemestry NDP requires the significance of heritage assets and their settings to be conserved and enhanced. The appellant's submitted Design and Access Statement refers to a 'key design requirement' that the original dwelling should remain the dominant feature on the site. However it is far from clear what is meant by this since the scale of the proposed accommodation is vast compared to what is currently found and (as I have previously indicated) would be widely apparent.
9. My observations confirm that the extensive accommodation proposed would dominate the setting of the existing cottage in a spatial and visual sense such that it would lose its significance as a freestanding remnant of historic land use. The original building would have the appearance and character of an annex subservient to (what would in practice be) the main living accommodation of the resultant dwelling. I have nothing before me that addresses the requirement of policy AYEnv3 at (f), nevertheless it is apparent that the significance of Yatton Cottage would be substantially diminished by its incorporation into what is proposed, and the proposal therefore conflicts with

¹ According to the Council by reference to the RCHM

Policy AYEnv3 of the NDP; which conflict, I consider, should also attract significant weight.

Conclusion

10. The appellant points to the intended off-grid status of the dwelling and other sustainability credentials. Whilst such objectives are clearly endorsed by local and national planning policy, I have no details to substantiate the benefits alleged beyond what would be required of a similar 'on grid' development. Even if such were provided it is unlikely that these could outweigh the irreversible harm to heritage and landscape assets that I have identified.
11. Therefore, for the reasons stated in consideration of the identified policies of the Ayemestry NDP and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with policies SD1 LD1 and LD4 of the Herefordshire Core Strategy which seek to protect heritage assets and that the design scale and nature of development should be positively influenced by the landscape. The proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and, in consequence, this appeal cannot succeed.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR