

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 7 June 2023

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/W/22/3300186

The Old Farmhouse, Compton Dundon, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6PS

- 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 Ms C Linney against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03862/HOU, dated 8 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 30 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing single storey extension, construction of new larger extension encompassing footprint of previous.
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Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/Y/22/3300187

The Old Farmhouse, Compton Dundon, Somerton, Somerset TA11 6PS

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Ms C Linney against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03487/LBC, dated 8 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 30 March 2022.
 - The works proposed are removal of existing single storey extension, construction of new larger extension encompassing footprint of previous.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. On 1 April 2023, after the lodging of these appeals, South Somerset District Council merged with neighbouring authorities to become Somerset Council. The status of the development plan policies referred to within the Council's decision notices are however unchanged insofar as they are relevant to my assessment.

Main Issue

3. The Old Farmhouse is a circa 1700 Grade II listed dwelling. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

Reasons

4. The main range of the listed building was extended with a full width, rear single storey during the 19th Century. In the 1970s that extension was linked to a, now converted, Victorian era outbuilding just to the south of and perpendicular to the house. At its north end the 19th Century extension has been substantially rebuilt to incorporate an enlarged living room and a conservatory extension. An innocuous little larder was also added at the other end in the last century.

5. The rear elevation of the Old Farmhouse is therefore marked by change, and the dwelling draws much of its significance from its comparatively well-preserved main range and the restrained elegance of its roadside frontage.
6. That said, the 19th century lean-to bears the hallmarks of a typical Victorian outshut constructed to provide additional kitchen or separate scullery space as sanitation became better understood. One can deduce, from the double Roman tiles across the dwelling's roofs, that the outshut is possibly contemporaneous with the reroofing of the main range¹. Thus, the surviving section of outshut is likely an integral part of a notable Victorian era modernisation of the dwelling, which I consider a clear contributor to its significance. Despite its physical link to the dwelling, the Victorian era outbuilding is plain and offset in its position and orientation and so retains legibility as a discrete agricultural structure. It also contributes to the special interest of the listed building in this sense.
7. It follows that the removal of part of the rear wall of the outshut and its proposed extension would result in the harmful loss of historic fabric and plan form relating to an important phase in the building's heritage. By filling much of the angle between the house and the flank of the once outbuilding, the remaining legibility of their original functional and physical separation would be compromised. In terms of the design of the extension, the immediate proximity of its roof to that of the outbuilding would form a somewhat uncoordinated ensemble of angles and an awkward valley junction in my opinion.
8. The Old Farmhouse and its grounds are well maintained, which is indicative of the appellant's clear care for the property. This is further endorsed by the representations made in support of the scheme. I also recognise that listed buildings are subject to evolution over time, and that the proposed extension would add a sense of balance to the rear. Nonetheless, for the reasons I have given, the proposal would not represent a positive change, but rather would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of The Old Farmhouse.
9. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) explains that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 202 goes on to require decision makers to weigh any less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the scheme, including securing its optimum viable use. Here, that exercise takes place in the context of s.16(2) and s.66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which set a strong presumption against a grant of planning permission or listed building consent if a scheme would cause harm to the special interest of a listed building.
10. The public benefit of the proposal would be in that it would improve the living conditions within the property for future and existing residents, with better, possibly even safer, circulation internally. The weight I attach to this benefit falls decisively short of justifying the harm that would be caused; harm that must be given considerable importance and weight in the balancing exercise.
11. An interested party has referred to housing schemes elsewhere in Compton Dundon. Each case must be assessed on its own merits, and the very limited information I have of these other sites has had little influence on my decision. Nor has reference to a potential, alternatively designed scheme at the site, because I must assess the proposed scheme as it is presented before me.

¹ Appellant's Historic Building Impact Assessment (2021) Paragraph 7.1.3

Similarly, the Council's 'Extensions and alterations to houses – a design guide' offers general guidance not highly applicable to a bespoke assessment of a scheme in relation to the specific significance of an individual heritage asset.

12. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building. The proposal would conflict with the heritage and design objectives of Policies EQ2 and EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-28) (adopted 2015).

Conclusion

13. For these given reasons, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones

INSPECTOR