



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 June 2023

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/P1133/D/23/3320998

Bramblewood, Road From Middle Rocombe Farm To Combeleigh Gables, Stokeinteignhead, Devon, TQ12 4QL

- 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 S Anderson against the decision of Teignbridge District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00908/HOU, dated 5 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is to remove roof and extend the property up and back with rear and roof extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including upon the setting of nearby heritage assets.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a modest, detached bungalow with a low-profile and hipped roof, and set back on elevated land behind a roadside bank roughly to the south side of a narrow rural lane and orientated perpendicular to it. The site is large and heavily vegetated around its perimeter, located on a steep valley side with land levels continuing to rise beyond its curtilage away from the road and leading into open countryside. It forms part of a hamlet centred around a linear range of buildings at Higher Rocombe Farm approximately 85m north-west of the site and which tightly enclose the narrow carriageway at this point on both sides. Beyond the settlement core leading towards the appeal site the development pattern is sporadic and loose-knit. There are no immediately neighbouring properties to the sides of Bramblewood. On the opposite side of the lane to the north-west are Meadow and Tudor Cottages, a semi-detached pair of two-storey dwellings set immediately at the back edge of the highway. On the opposite side to the north-east is Little Orchard, a large, Grade II listed thatched cottage set back from the road and largely screened by mature vegetation.
4. The site lies within an area designated within the Teignbridge Local Plan 2013-2033 (TLP) as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), recognised as such for its scenic quality, and outside of any defined settlement boundary. It is

therefore classed as within open countryside where TLP Policy 22 states that development will be strictly managed but which allows for, amongst other things, alterations and extensions to dwellings.

5. The proposal would significantly alter the traditional appearance of the existing dwelling. Little of its original form would remain, other than its rectangular footprint and set-back distance from the plot's frontage. The pitched roof of the existing building would be removed in favour of a stepped, part single-storey, part two-storey flat-roofed structure which in turn would become integrated with a new approximately 7m wide, two-storey wing to the south side designed with a mono-pitched roof and which would project significantly beyond the front and rear elevations of the dwelling. There would be a further, roughly 5m deep single-storey, flat roof garage projection to the west facing elevation of the new side wing. The result would be an unashamedly contemporary remodelling of the existing building with substantial extensions.
6. Whilst there is a rural vernacular to the architecture of the hamlet's core, this dissipates when moving away from it, with a much more eclectic style to the buildings in the direction of the appeal site where there is no set rhythm to the development pattern. The Council is critical of the blocky design of the proposal and materials proposed to be used. The mixed use of smooth render and stone would strongly reflect materials that are widely seen in the area. In my view these would combine with more contemporary roofing materials and fenestration to create a unique building of interest. I also note that similar approaches to design have been accepted by the Council within the wider locality of the AGLV.
7. In terms of size, it is acknowledged that there would be a significant uplift in floorspace beyond the very modest dimensions of the existing dwelling. However, TLP Policy S22 does not impose any constraints upon the proportionate size of extensions relative to the original building for dwellings within the countryside. Neither does TLP Policy WE8, which deals with domestic extensions more generally. This merely requires the scale of extensions to be appropriate to the existing building when tested against four specific criteria.
8. The resulting building would be undeniably large when compared to the existing. However, I do not agree with some suggestions that it would represent an overdevelopment, implying that it would somehow appear cramped in its setting, which it would not, with ample surrounding amenity space. I deal with the impact upon neighbouring amenity below but suffice to say here that the scale of the proposal would not result in harm to any neighbours' living conditions through loss of light, outlook, privacy or overbearing impact. Overall, as a part single-storey, part two-storey building with a predominantly flat roof, I find that the remodelled property would be appropriately domestic in scale and proportion.
9. However, it is important to recognise that the existing dwelling appears as an unobtrusive feature within the rural landscape, partly due to the screening offered by the vegetation on the site, but also as a result of its positioning and modest size. The plot is currently defined by the dominance of its natural verdant quality rather than its buildings, blending with and contributing to the open and spacious rural character of its setting. This would notably change. I acknowledge the appellant's efforts to keep the bulk and mass of the

extensions low by cutting into the land levels to the south side of the dwelling and by avoiding the use of traditional pitched roofs. Nevertheless, the direction of sprawl proposed by the majority of new built form, and which would be the most dominant part of the resulting building in terms of scale, would be significant. The two-storey extension would encroach into land that is currently open and which can be seen and appreciated from the surroundings, especially from some vantage points along the adjoining lane, as naturally verdant, open and spacious. The building would become significantly more visually prominent. The existing vegetation would not hide the enlarged building entirely from view, especially during the winter months with less foliage. Whilst additional screen planting is proposed, it would be inappropriate to rely upon this to attempt to hide a building that would intrinsically fail to integrate with its surroundings by reason of the siting and visual dominance of the proposed extensions.

10. I have carefully considered the effects of the proposal on nearby heritage assets. I understand that some buildings at Higher Rocombe Farm are Grade II listed. These are a significant distance from the appeal site and unrelated to it in any meaningful context.
11. Little Orchard is on the opposite side of the lane. It is a pre-1700 cottage constructed of cob and is recognised for its architectural interest. It enjoys a fairly secluded and isolated setting behind roadside vegetation within a large plot located on the inside of a bend along the adjoining lane. It is partially glimpsed from various viewpoints along the public domain, but the building itself has little visual connection with the appeal site, other than opposing site frontages. This is due to a number of factors including separation distances, the topography of the area, the alignment of the road, and its typically rural narrow enclosure with verges, hedges and vegetation to each side. I am not persuaded that the surroundings within which Little Orchard is experienced would be affected by the proposal to any degree that would be harmful to its setting. As a consequence, the significance of Little Orchard as a designated heritage asset would be unaffected.
12. The Council considers Meadow Cottage and Tudor Cottage to be non-designated heritage assets due to their age and quality. Although these buildings themselves are prominent, for similar reasons expressed above, they have little visual association with the appeal site beyond its frontage.
13. Overall, I find the two-storey scale of the proposed contemporary styled extended dwelling would be appropriate to the size of the plot and the development pattern to this part of the hamlet. I am also satisfied that it would have no impact upon the setting of any nearby heritage assets. There would therefore be no conflict with TLP Policy EN5 which deals with heritage assets or with the National Planning Policy Framework's (the Framework) objectives for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Nevertheless, by reason of extensive sprawl into open parts of the site, the enlarged and skewed displacement of the building would appear prominent and conspicuously discordant within its rural context. As such, it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and its countryside setting. For these reasons, there would be conflict with TLP Policies S1 and S2 as far as they require development to maintain, integrate with and, where possible, enhance the qualities, character and distinctiveness of the built and natural environment of the locality. I recognise that the existing dwelling has

no particular architectural merit. But by failing to adapt or improve its unobtrusive presence in a manner that would complement the character of the area, there would also be conflict with TLP Policy WE8. For the same reasons there would be conflict with the Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed places.

Other Matters

14. In addition to matters that I have addressed above as part of the appeal's main issue, I have noted some further matters that have been raised.
15. The siting of the proposed extended property would be sufficiently far removed from neighbouring properties to avoid any harmful impacts upon the living conditions of any nearby occupiers in terms of potential visual harm from appearing overbearing, or privacy from overlooking. These findings are consistent with the Council.
16. The Council's Biodiversity Officer took note of the appellant's Wildlife Survey and raised no objection to the proposal subject to various suggested conditions to provide biodiversity net gain and to safeguard protected species. These are important matters but, given my findings in relation to the main issue, it has not been necessary for me to consider them in any greater detail as it does not alter my overall conclusion in relation to the appeal.
17. I understand the rural character of the surrounding highway network, but I am not persuaded that any traffic associated with the construction work would necessarily impact highway safety. I note that the county highway authority raised no objection.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given, notwithstanding my findings in relation to the setting of nearby heritage assets, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR