



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2023

by F Harrison BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/23/3319720

2 West Hedgeley, Powburn, Northumberland NE66 4JB

- 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 E Smith against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00637/FUL, dated 18 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 9 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is alterations and extension to Cobblers Cottage.
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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 the appeal property and the setting and significance of the nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located to the rear of a row of semi-detached bungalows and accommodates a detached two storey dwelling and single storey outbuilding. Adjacent are the outbuildings associated with the bungalows and to the rear and side are open fields. The area is characterised by small scale properties within narrow plots which creates a harmonious character and appearance with a clear sense of balance.
4. The nearby bungalows are Grade II listed buildings. As such, having regard to the duties imposed by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), I have assessed the appeal scheme against these heritage assets, having special regard to the desirability of preserving their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.
5. The Grade II listed buildings comprise three pairs of cottages linked by a short length of wall. The buildings' significance derives from its special architectural and historic interest which includes its traditional design and appearance. The setting of the cottages and linking wall includes the open land to the front and rear, and the relationship between them and the buildings to the side and rear, including the appeal property.
6. The proposal would introduce a two-storey side extension, largely on the footprint of the existing outbuilding. The ridge height would match the roof of the existing property, with two dormer windows inserted into the roofscape. A single storey curved conservatory is also proposed between the extension and the existing gabled front elevation.

7. The two-storey extension would have materials to match the existing property and the nearby cottages and would be locally sourced. Nevertheless, it would not appear subservient to the appeal property owing to the width of the proposal which would be almost as wide as the original property and the continuation of the ridge height along the full width the original property and the extension. It would be a bulky addition, unbalancing the original property and the otherwise harmonious small-scale character of the area and would thereby appear incongruous.
8. The appellant has drawn my attention to a previous planning permission for extension and alteration at the appeal site granted in 1999 and suggests that the plans approved in 1999 are the same as those that form this appeal. However, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on a scheme I have not seen and in any event, I must determine this appeal on its own planning merits.
9. The appeal scheme creates a prominent development, at odds with the nearby cottages which are modest in scale. Owing to the width of the proposed development, the full extent of which is highly visible and experienced in proximity to the listed buildings, the appeal scheme detracts from the setting of these heritage assets. Consequently, the proposal would not preserve the listed building's special and historic interest. The harm that I have identified is 'less than substantial' harm.
10. I observed the poor state of repair of the appeal property which detracts from the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the nearby listed buildings. I also acknowledge the building control notice stating that the building is at risk of collapsing. However, it has not been shown that the appeal scheme is the only way of achieving the appellant's aim of bringing the dwelling back into use. Similarly, while it may be that the existing narrow dwelling would not be suitable for many households, there is no detailed evidence that the appeal scheme is the only way in which to extend the property to provide additional space, including bathroom and kitchen facilities, to ensure the property is fit for modern day living. These matters therefore attract limited weight.
11. The appellant suggests that the proposal would provide for a much-needed small affordable dwelling in this rural location. However, I have not been presented with any clear evidence that there is a need for such housing in the area and as such this is of limited weight. Accordingly, overall, there are no public benefits sufficient to weigh against the permanent harm that would arise to the significance of the listed buildings.
12. For the reasons given above, the proposal would be unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the area, including the appeal property and the setting and significance of the nearby listed buildings, in conflict with policies ENV1, ENV7, QOP2 and HOU9 of the Northumberland Local Plan (2022). Amongst other things, these policies require development to conserve and enhance the significance, quality and integrity of Northumberland's heritage assets and their settings. Extensions to existing dwellings are required to be well-related and subordinate in size and massing and not have a visually obtrusive impact on neighbouring uses.

13. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework in Section 12 with regard to achieving well designed places, and Section 15 on preserving and conserving heritage assets.

Other Matters

14. The principle of residential development at the site is not in dispute, existing car parking provision would remain, and I note that the appellant has given careful consideration to separation distances to ensure that the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers are not unduly harmed. However, policy compliance on these matters would only be a neutral factor.

Conclusion

15. My above findings bring the proposal into conflict with the development plan, read as a whole. There are no material considerations that have been shown to have sufficient weight to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

F Harrison

INSPECTOR