



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2023

by Nichola Robinson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W1850/W/22/3311861

Old Juniper Cottage, C1019 Pipe Aston to Monstay Farm Access, Pipe Aston, Herefordshire SY8 2HG

- 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 James Hepworth against the decision of Herefordshire Council.
 - The application Ref P220747, dated 16 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is extension to Old Juniper Cottage and change of use of land to residential use.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development on the application form includes words that are not an act of development. Some add information about what is being proposed and I have had regard to that in arriving at my decision, but for clarity have omitted these words from the description in my heading and formal decision. Additionally, the description of development on the decision notice differs from that on the appeal form. As this amendment to the description was fully considered by the Council and better reflects the full extent of the proposal, I have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of Old Juniper Cottage as a non-designated heritage asset; and
 - the landscape character of the area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Old Juniper Cottage is a small 2 storey stone dwelling which is set within a valley. It is stated that the property was semi-ruinous until reconstruction 45 years ago and parts of the building were reconstructed incorporating 'picturesque' design features. Nonetheless, the cottage maintains a modest, traditional appearance and is regarded by both parties as a non-designated

heritage asset, its significance of which derives from its largely unaltered nature as an example of a historic forester's cottage.

5. The proposal relates to an extension and associated change of use of land to residential use. The design of the extension would be clearly legible as a later addition to the property. However, the extension would be significant in scale and would exceed the height of the appeal property. The extension would be partly-sited on ground higher than the appeal property which would completely dominate the modest host dwelling. Thus, whilst the form and outline of the existing dwelling would be preserved and the link attachment would be subservient in scale, the scale of the proposed extension would be excessive and would form an unsympathetic addition to the property.
6. Furthermore, notwithstanding the reported merits and local historical significance of the picturesque architectural style of the proposal, the proposed design, with its castellations and parapets, would be completely at odds with the modest, traditional appearance of the appeal property. Consequently, the extension would appear as an incongruous addition which would fail to assimilate with the design, scale, form and proportions of this non designated heritage asset, harming its character, appearance and significance as a modest historic forester's cottage.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires at Paragraph 203 that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining an application and requires a balanced judgment having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset which in this case would be significant in both proportion and the effect on its setting and therefore its significance¹.
8. For these reasons, the proposal would be contrary to the aims of Policies SD1 and LD4 of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031 (2015) (CS) and Policies WG1a and WG8 of the Wigmore Group Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031 (2019) (NP) and the aims of the Framework. These policies seek to ensure that distinctive features of existing buildings and their settings are safeguarded, and heritage assets protected, conserved and where possible enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Landscape character

9. The surrounding landscape comprises densely forested steep slopes and open pastoral fields sparsely settled by farmsteads and modest cottages. The appeal site is located at the end of a private track between a steeply sloping wooded valley and pastoral fields. The site is highly visible within the surrounding landscape where it makes a positive contribution to the unaltered and tranquil character and appearance of the area.
10. The siting of the proposed extension on a prominent sloping field, and associated change of use would bring dominant built form to an area which is characterised by modest buildings set within a tranquil and largely-unaltered valley. The scale and design of the extension would jar with this landscape character, resulting in harm to the largely unaltered landscape character of the area within a prominent part of the landscape.

¹ Framework glossary page 67 makes clear that a heritage asset includes assets identified by the local planning authority as heritage assets.

11. In light of the above the proposal would result in a dominant and uncharacteristic form of development which would harm the local landscape. The proposal would therefore be contrary to those aims of LP Policy LD1 and NP Policy WG1 which seek to ensure that the historic landscape settings and natural environment are conserved and enhanced, and the character of the landscape positively influences the design and scale of development.

Other Matters

12. Support for the proposal from local residents, the Ludlow Civic Society and the Picturesque Society is noted. Nonetheless, given the scale of the proposal, I attribute limited weight to this.
13. The appellant intends to employ a building team with experience working on historic buildings and states that the proposal would use locally-sourced materials and traditional crafts. Given the scale of the proposal, I attribute limited weight to this.
14. The appellant states that the proposal would improve the overall energy efficiency of the building. Whilst this is welcomed, it attracts limited weight in the overall planning balance.
15. The appellant states that the proposal would provide an accommodation unit close to the local service centre of Ludlow. However, the proposal is for an extension to an existing dwelling and does not therefore provide an additional unit of accommodation. I therefore attribute no weight to this.
16. Individually or cumulatively these matters do not have sufficient weight to outweigh the harm which would be caused to the designated heritage asset.

Conclusion

17. The Framework makes it clear that a balanced judgement is required when considering the impact of development on non-designated heritage assets. Equally wider benefits must be balanced against any harm in order to determine if they would constitute material considerations which would indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
18. On the evidence before me there is insufficient justification to warrant a decision other than in accordance with the development plan and the aims of the Framework in relation to the protection of non-designated heritage assets from any harm or loss of significance and consequently the appeal is dismissed.

Nichola Robinson

INSPECTOR