
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2023

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10.08.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/V2255/D/22/3313953

The Cottage, Ashford Road, Sheldwich, Kent, ME13 0LT

- 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 Richard and Kate Lacey against the decision of Swale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/503951/FULL, dated 10 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 6 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing shed, part ground floor/part first floor rear extension, to be replaced with the erection of a part single storey, part two storey rear and side extension, installation of log burner with flue and changes to fenestration. Erection of a new garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. I consider that the main issue in this case is its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The Cottage is a two storey detached house in a large plot in a relatively isolated position in the countryside. It is at the northern edge of the Sheldwich Conservation Area, from the main part of which it is separated by fields and woodland. The house is clearly visible from the A251 Ashford Road as a result of the removal of several mature trees which previously screened the site.
4. There is a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (the Framework) states that in the consideration of development proposals great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets in accordance with the significance of the asset and any harm should require clear and convincing justification.
5. I consider that the policies relevant in this case include ST3, CP4, CP8, DM11, DM14, DM16, DM24 and DM33 of Bearing Fruits 2031 The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017 (the local plan). Among other things, these relate to strategic aims for settlements, including development in the countryside; the requirement for high quality design, the conservation of the historic environment and valued

landscapes and criteria for alterations and extensions to existing buildings. The Council's Guide for Householders *Designing an Extension* provides more detailed guidance.

6. I consider that the proposed extension would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the existing house because of its scale, mass, and design. The house is built in a simple, cottage style of white painted brick and shallow pitched slate roof. It has a double frontage with central door facing the road and forms an L-shape with a two storey rear wing. It is identified as a non-designated heritage asset because of its age, location within the settlement and association with the settlement.
7. The proposed wrap-around single storey extension with its flat roof and timber cladding would appear poorly integrated with and in too great a contrast to the existing traditional form of the house, particularly in relation to the south and east elevations which are the most visible in views of the house from the east (front) and from some distance along the road from the south (side) and from the vehicular entrance to the site, also to the south, which is clearly the most used approach.
8. The proposed demolition of the two storey extension in the angle between the main and rear wings of the house would result in the removal of a poor quality element of no architectural merit. However, its replacement with a full two storey extension filling in the whole of the angle, together with a crown roof, would be a bulky, square form which would appear disproportionate and out of keeping with the traditional footprint and form of the original house. The proposed set back from the south and west elevations is minimal and would not significantly reduce the impact of the bulk and mass of the extension.
9. The combination of the large wrap-around single storey extension and infill at first floor level would amount to a significant increase in both footprint and volume of the existing house which would be out of proportion with the original house. It would be contrary to the Council's policies to limit extensions to dwellings in the countryside to a modest increase in size and would detract from the property and its setting. I consider that it does not respect the design and scale of the building and would be poorly integrated with the original form and character of the house. The use of weatherboarding, while characteristic of materials used in some properties in the surrounding area, including the conservation area, would not mitigate the overall impact of the proposal in its setting.
10. The site is in a relatively isolated location on the edge of the part of the conservation area where the predominant characteristic is fields and woodland. The large scale of the proposal would be a visual intrusion into the countryside and this part of the conservation area. This would amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area, and there is limited public benefit to justify the harm.
11. The appellants have removed the substantial trees which screened the house from most viewpoints. They have expressed the intention to plant new native species trees and I saw during my site visit that some planting has taken place along a line running south in line with the front elevation of the house. However, large trees sufficient to replace the former screen would take a considerable time to grow and cannot wholly be relied on. It is not generally a

satisfactory approach to rely on using screening to render acceptable a development which would otherwise be unacceptable.

12. I accept that the building is in need of refurbishment and that the existing accommodation is modest. I consider that it would be capable of extension but that this is not an appropriate solution. The plot is large and capable of accommodating an extension more in keeping with the style and character of the existing house.
13. The existing shed is of traditional design and materials and of some historic interest, but in poor condition. Although it would be desirable to retain it and bring it into beneficial use, its loss would cause minimal harm to the property and its setting and would not be sufficient justification on its own to dismiss the appeal.
14. The proposed garage would be relatively modest in size, with timber cladding and located in the southeast corner of the site near the existing vehicular access. It would appear in keeping with the surroundings.
15. I conclude that the proposed extension would harm the character and appearance of the house itself, its rural setting and the conservation area, contrary to local plan policies ST3, CP4, CP8, DM11, DM14, DM16, DM24 and DM33.
16. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR