



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2023

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/Y/22/3311475

St James Cottage, 46-47 Pond Head To Whitechurch Road, Milton Abbas, DT11 0BP

- 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 Dr & Mrs D Keane against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/LBC/2021/04454, dated 1 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2022.
 - The works proposed are demolish existing garage, erect new extension and alterations to listed cottage with associated landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Applications for listed building consent and planning permission for the proposal were refused by the Council. This appeal relates to the Council's refusal of the listed building consent. The refusal of planning permission for the proposal was not appealed by the appellants.

Main Issues

3. The effect of the proposal upon the special interest of the grade II listed building known as St James' Cottage, and whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Milton Abbas Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Additionally, Section 72 of the LBCA requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
5. St James' Cottage dates from circa 1780. It has a simple vernacular appearance. It was built as a pair of small workers cottages that were served by a single front entrance door. This has been replaced by a window and a new front door inserted on one side. Despite this, the building retains a strong sense of symmetry to the front as a result of its even placement of windows and matching chimneys to either side of the ridge. It has evolved from its original iteration and has seen some internal loss including the removal of its original staircases; however, its original form and appearance can still be easily appreciated from the street.

6. A long rear wing in matching materials is suggested to be Victorian in age. Additional more modest single storey additions include a lean-to and garage. The plot slopes down from the higher ground at the rear towards the road, to the extent that the rear garden is at roughly first floor level for the most part, with a small lower level courtyard area between the lean-to and garage, enclosed by a retaining wall. From this upper level, and from the Churchyard at the rear of the garden, despite the presence of the various extensions, the form and scale of the original building can be appreciated as one is able to easily look down onto the building.
7. The impact of the rear wing, although long, is mitigated by its matching materials, narrow width, and manner by which it extends away from the original building into the hillside. Similarly, the flat roofed garage extends into the hillside at the rear. It reads as part of the upper level of garden from most vantage points, particularly as it stands away from the building and is topped with paving slabs. It is not prominent to view from the upper level at the rear. Thus, the original form of the building is an appreciable characteristic that contributes to its special interest.
8. From the higher ground of the Churchyard at the rear the listed building can be seen in the context of the other almost identical cottages that line both sides of the road. From here the even spacing of the cottages and the consistent and characterful appearance of their thatched roofs, which are seen in the context of the steeply sloping woodland opposite, create a picturesque and unusual historic scene. Thus, the relationship between the appeal building and these matching buildings is a highly important aspect of its setting that contributes to its special interest.
9. The cottage lined road is a primary component of the Milton Abbas Conservation Area (MACA). This dominant central street, with its dwellings set back behind wide and undeveloped grass verges with woodland rising behind buildings to either side creates a celebrated picturesque streetscene. Its characterful appearance is enhanced by its historic interest as a planned late 18th century rural housing development, which is noted as one of the first model villages in Britain.
10. The proposal would see the modest lean-to and garage replaced with a more substantial extension. Although a lean-to form would be retained, the extension would be drawn out beyond this and beyond the side wall of the original building to extend into the area of the existing garage. Whilst the appearance at the front would remain largely unchanged, at the rear the extent of glazing, particularly the broad spread of glazing along the rear façade, would be highly prominent.
11. Extending historic buildings in a straightforward contemporary manner is a well-established conservation approach that often allows the identity of the building to exist alongside an addition that can be clearly identified as a modern intervention. In this case however, although the extension would be single storey, its flat rear façade would give it a prominent and substantial scale. It would fail to sit as a modest and subservient addition at the rear but would instead dominate and appear at odds with the simpler and more modest forms of the host building.
12. This impact would be readily felt from the upper levels of the rear garden and Churchyard, where views of the rear of the extension would be easily gained.

From here the uncomfortable and rather clumsy mismatch between the separate roof elements and the division of glazing beneath would be seen, as would the way the flat area of glazing would wrap around the corner of the original building. Wrapping around the corner of the building with a single material would fail to have regard to the primacy of the building's original form and would ignore the manner by which traditional buildings, including those nearby are typically extended, whereby additions are set back from, or at least align with, existing elevations to maintain a clear additive and subservient form.

13. The proposal includes the blocking up of two openings in the rear wall of the building that would appear to be original. Blocking original openings would cause harm, especially as the plans show that the blocked openings would not be expressed within the extension. It is suggested that the blocked window at the rear could be omitted. However, the plans before me show that the window would be blocked, so this is not something I can include in my consideration of the appeal.
14. There are several comments before me relating to the harm that would arise from a view of the interior of the extension through open front facing doors. The plans before me show that the road facing elevation of the dining area would be faced with a large pair of doors that would look like a pair of garage doors with high level glazing, alongside a single entrance door. A view into the dining area from the road through a large opening would be harmful, as it would draw the eye away from the front of the building and would be at odds with the scale of other front facing openings that give a restricted view into interior living spaces.
15. However, in this case, it would be highly unlikely that occupants of the dwelling would find it desirable to keep the doors open for long periods as it would significantly diminish their privacy and would be akin to leaving a front door open onto the street. When shut the doors would still allow daylight in and a view out. Additionally, the large rearward glazing, which is better orientated in any case, would be openable. For these reasons I am satisfied that this element of the proposal would not cause harm.
16. For the reasons given the proposal would cause considerable harm to the special interest of the listed building owing to its form and scale and the blocking of openings at the rear. Its bold modern appearance would detract from the existing attractive view over the rear of the building where it is seen in the context of other cottages and would thus fail to preserve the character and appearance of the MACA.
17. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) the harm would be less than substantial. Paragraph 202 of the Framework establishes that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
18. The existing kitchen is described as small, dark and mean, and it is suggested that the proposals would improve the amenity of the dwelling, which would in turn improve the chances of a long term commitment to ownership. Such a matter could be accepted as a public benefit as frequent changes in ownership often result in a lack of commitment to maintenance and repair, and pressure for regular change. The existing kitchen is dark, dated and in a poor state of repair. However, I am not satisfied that it should be regarded as small and mean. It is reasonably sized for the dwelling, well proportioned and well related

to the adjacent dining room. It would be greatly improved if refitted and decorated in lighter colours.

19. In other respects, the existing dwelling is well served by a large living room, generous circulation space, and a good number of bedrooms and bathrooms, sufficient to provide a comfortable family home. I accept that it is in need of modernisation and that the proposal would vastly improve the current provision of living space. However, I am not convinced that the accommodation it currently provides is so deficient that the proposed changes should be considered essential to secure the building's future or secure its long term occupation as a dwelling. The benefits to the layout and accommodation provision would thus be a private benefit to the occupants of the dwelling.
20. The building is in a poor state of repair. At my visit I saw that it has suffered from a lack of maintenance over a long period of time, evidenced by damp build up and water ingress. There can be no doubt that the repair of the building would be a part of a proposal of this scale. It is however highly likely that any new owner would prioritise the repair of the building, regardless of whether they chose to extend or alter it. Taking these factors together I am of the view that this is a public benefit that should attract some weight.
21. The public benefits of the proposal therefore carry some weight. I need to consider this in the context of paragraph 189 of the Framework, which states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and paragraph 199 which establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset. I have found that the proposal would cause considerable harm to the special interest of the listed building and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the MACA. In weighing these matters together, I am not satisfied that the benefits would be sufficient to outweigh the degree of harm identified.
22. In summary, the proposal would fail to meet the requirements of the LBCA as it would harm the special interest of the listed building and fail to preserve the character and appearance of the MACA. It would also be contrary to Policy 5 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 which repeats the need to weigh the harm against any public benefits, and Policy MA3 of the Milton Abbas Neighbourhood Development Plan which seeks to ensure that proposals respect historic distinctiveness.

Other Matters

23. Matters relating to the impact of the proposal upon the setting of the adjacent Church are before me. This is a consideration that is however beyond the scope of an appeal made under Section 20 of the LBCA.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons above, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR