



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2023

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 September 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/D/23/3322032

2 Ivy Cottage, Low Road, Little Cheverell, Wiltshire, SN10 4JX

- 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 Benjamin Thompson against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/2022/06877, dated 4 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 February 2023.
 - The development proposed was described as the erection of a '*New detached garage, turning zone and reconfigured steps up to existing 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 Little Cheverell Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two-storey red brick and clay tiled cottage dating from the 19th century. It was originally two separate units as part of a terrace of three but now forms the larger half of a semi-detached pair (Nos 1 and 2 Ivy Cottages). The semi-detached pair sit high above the narrow width carriageway of Low Road, well-separated from neighbouring properties, and set back behind a steeply vegetated bank within the Little Cheverell Conservation Area (CA). The Council's *Little Cheverell Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals* (CACAMP) document, dated September 2007, identifies and records the special qualities of Little Cheverell that make up its architectural and historic character. The CACAMP describes the special interest of the CA. I saw for myself this being derived from its largely unspoilt 18th and 19th century buildings creating an attractive rural village character that is heavily dependent upon trees and its landscape setting. The CACAMP goes on to highlight how the rural character of Low Road, comprising mostly a single-track road enclosed by banks, hedges and trees, contributes to the wider character and appearance of the CA. In addition, Nos 1 and 2 Ivy Cottages are identified within the CACAMP as locally important 'unlisted' buildings.
4. The appeal proposal would involve cutting into the bank in a position below and to the side of the dwelling, to create a shallow vehicular access in the form of a roadside layby that would lead to a new double-width garage and attached side store. The front elevation of the building would be finished with reclaimed

- brickwork and a combination of an up-and-over garage door for the double-parking bay and a pair of side hung doors to the store area. The splayed side retaining walls are described on the application drawings as 'green walls' with a flat green roof over the structure and a native hedgerow around its perimeter.
5. The appellant has argued that the proposal would blend seamlessly with the surroundings. I disagree. I acknowledge the efforts made to shroud the building in vegetation which would soften its appearance in part. But this would not fully disguise the significant shift that would occur to the existing rural street scene. The natural features and contours of the roadside bank play an important part in defining the setting of Nos 1 and 2 Ivy Cottages and the special character of the wider CA. The proposal would result in the loss of a large and significant portion of the bank in favour of a principally utilitarian and uncharacteristically contemporary structure that would be visually dominant and discordant when viewed in the approach from both directions along Low Road.
 6. The urbanising effects of the proposal would be further exaggerated by the necessary loss of a tree described by the appellant's arboricultural report as a relatively young/early mature red oak of moderate quality with amenity value. Despite being a non-native species, I saw for myself the tree to be fairly large with a significant and imposing visual presence set above the level of the road on higher ground and contributing positively to the wooded nature and verdant qualities of the area. Its loss would be noticeable and would further erode the CA's rural landscape setting. Although replacement tree planting is proposed, no specific details have been provided and, based upon my observations during my visit, it is difficult to understand where any meaningful compensation could be provided.
 7. Overall, I find that the proposal would appear significantly damaging to the rural character of Low Road. This in turn would harm the character and the appearance of the CA. Having regard to paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I consider the harm arising from the development to the significance of the CA as a heritage asset would be less than substantial. However, this does not equate to a less than substantial objection and any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification in line with paragraph 200 of the Framework, and in line with paragraph 202, such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development.
 8. Given the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) 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 the CA, I attach significant weight to the harm that I have identified to the historic environment.
 9. The appellant has argued that the proposal would provide significant public benefits by addressing parking issues along the narrow Low Road. I saw during my visit a number of cars parked along Low Road away from the immediate context of the appeal site and closer to the village core. At this point the road has a width that is able to accommodate some parked vehicles. Whilst any parked vehicles would be undeniably visually prominent, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that parking in this location creates a particular hazard to public or highway safety.

10. The provision of two off-street parking spaces at the appeal site would have the benefit of removing two cars owned by the occupants of 2 Ivy Cottage from otherwise being parked on-street in the locality. However, it would not remove the capability for other cars to continue to park along Low Road where they are able and can lawfully be accommodated. Where parking does occur along Low Road the spaces are not allocated and, in my judgement, they are likely to be occupied more often than not regardless of any parking available at No 2. As such, any benefit that may accrue would be largely personal to the appellant in terms of parking convenience rather than having any public benefit.
11. Arguments put forward by the appellant that there would be significant landscape enhancements at the appeal site do not reflect my own findings for the reasons I have amplified above.
12. I accept that the proposal would provide enhanced storage for the appellant, but that would be a personal gain. I saw no clutter at the appeal site that was damaging to the visual amenities of the locality and which would benefit from utilising the storage space proposed. Overall, I attach very little weight to any of the perceived public benefits that have been put to me.

Conclusions

13. For the reasons given, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the Little Cheverell CA. As such, there is conflict with Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) as far as they require development to be of a high quality in order to respect and enhance local distinctiveness and to protect and conserve the historic environment. For the same reasons there would be conflict with the Framework's objectives for conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
14. I have noted some support for the proposal from some interested parties, including from the Parish Council. However, this does not alter my findings. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR