



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 December 2023

by F Harrison BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 January 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/23/3327856

14 Castle Street, Norham, Northumberland TD15 2LQ

- 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 and Mrs Craig Cockburn against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 22/03923/FUL, dated 20 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 30 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is first floor extension to dwelling house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During the appeal, a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) came into effect. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal have not been significantly amended. As a result, I consider that there is no requirement for me to seek further submissions on the revised Framework, and I am satisfied that no party's interests have been prejudiced by my taking this approach.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, bearing in mind that it would be within the Norham Conservation Area (NCA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site accommodates a two-storey end of terrace dwelling that has previously been extended at the rear. The property is finished in stone, with a rendered lean to at the ground floor level. A public footpath runs along the side of the appeal site. While the surrounding properties have a number of extensions and alterations, the similarity in the general scale of the built form, including the sloped roofscape and the use of matching materials creates a sense of balance and a harmonious character and appearance.
5. The site falls within the NCA. I observed that the NCA features a broad mix of design of period dwellings constructed from traditional materials, including a predominance of stone. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the significance of the NCA is primarily derived from the traditional architectural style of properties and the sense of unity created by a simple palette of materials. As a

traditional, stone built dwelling the appeal property contributes positively to the character and appearance of the NCA.

6. A flat roof design has been chosen to minimise the massing of the proposed first floor infill development. It may be that flat roofs are a common way of extending properties in the Northumberland area, however in this location, and at first floor level, the roof design would have a poor degree of integration with the appeal property and the sloped roofscape of the surrounding area. While the height of the proposal would be lower than the ridge of the appeal property, the introduction of a flat roof, in an otherwise harmonious sloped roofscape would draw the eye, having an awkward presence. In doing so it would be detrimental to the prevailing character and appearance of the NCA.
7. I note the appellants' attempts to address the Council's concerns through several amendments to the scheme during the determination of the planning application. However, despite the L shaped design, the proposal would result in a boxy addition, unbalancing the original property and the general scale of the built form of the area. Furthermore, the proposed size and arrangement of window openings at the first floor would not relate well to the size and spacings between the upper openings of the appeal property. Consequently, the proposal would be unduly prominent, and it would stand out as being visually incongruous. While there have been no objections to the scheme from neighbouring occupiers or the Parish Council, this is not a reason, in itself, to allow harmful development.
8. Part of the appeal property is finished in render at the ground floor level, nevertheless, the increased use of this material, and at first floor level would look harmfully out of place with the original dwelling's stone finish and would not sit comfortably with the predominance of stone in the neighbouring properties. Therefore, the proposal's appearance would be a discordant feature, disrupting the general consistency in appearance at the rear of Castle Street. This visual intrusion would be readily apparent in public views from the adjacent footpath.
9. I have considered the examples of properties in the surrounding area which have been altered and extended to the rear, using a range of materials and including two storey additions. However, the context of the other examples differs in overall appearance and relationship with the respective main property. They do not have a flat roof design at the first floor, nor did I observe an extensive use of render. As such, the other examples are not directly comparable, and do not lead me away from my above findings.
10. Overall, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the NCA and would harm its significance as a whole. The harm that I have identified is 'less than substantial' harm. The Framework requires that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, irrespective of the level of harm. Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should also require a clear and convincing justification.
11. Nevertheless, the Framework also requires such harm to be weighed against any public benefits. The proposal would upgrade the property however this is largely a private benefit. While there would be economic benefits arising from employment during the construction stage, owing to the scale of the scheme this would be of limited weight and is insufficient to outweigh the great weight attached to the harm of the designated heritage asset.

12. For the reasons given, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, failing to preserve the NCA and harming its significance. The scheme is therefore in conflict with Policies QOP1, HOU9, ENV7 and ENV9 of the Northumberland Local Plan (2022). Amongst other things, these policies require residential extensions to be of a high quality of design, well related to the existing dwelling, forming a visually indivisible single dwelling as a whole. Within conservation areas, development is required to enhance and reinforce local distinctiveness, respecting existing architectural and historic character and for proposals that would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the asset, this is to be weighed against the public benefits.
13. The proposal would also be contrary to the heritage protection provisions of Section 16 of the Framework

Conclusion

14. 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 is dismissed.

F Harrison

INSPECTOR