



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 April 2024

by Eleni Randle BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/24/3338477

20 Hillfoot Road, Shillington, Hitchin, SG5 3NS

- 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 T Hardy against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/23/03449/FULL dated 19 October 2023 was refused by notice dated 16 January 2024.
 - The development proposed is first floor infill link extension including the raising of the roof of the existing side extension. Erection of a 1.5 storey side extension following the demolition of existing single storey flat roof extension. New pitched roof dormer to flank elevation following removal of existing dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have utilised the Council's description of the development as per the decision notice as I feel it more concisely describes the development.
3. As part of the appellant's submissions, two further plans have been submitted (22-H12-PC3 and 22-H12-PC4). I have taken these plans into consideration as part of this appeal as they do not seek to evolve the proposal but instead seek to clarify, through relevant highlighting, the extent of the proposed extensions beyond the existing/host building dimensions.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a one and a half storey, cottage style, dwelling which stands in the village of Shillington (outside of the Conservation Area). It is attached to 18 Hillfoot Road (no. 18) which is, when viewing from the front elevation, located to the rear orientated at 90 degrees from the highway with an overall higher ridge than the host dwelling. The host dwelling is noted to benefit from a more modern side extension which was carried out in the 1980's, however, both parts are rendered timber frame buildings with traditional clay tiles and there is no dispute between the parties that the appeal site is a non-designated heritage asset. The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework), paragraph 209, outlines that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in

determining the application. In weighing applications directly or indirectly affect non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

6. The appeal site is set forward of the building line of the more modern properties which have been constructed to the northwest with the existing side elevation (roof), and dormer windows, being prominent in views over the existing outbuilding along Hillfoot Road. At the time of my site visit, I found that the side elevation, and property in general, were clear and notable in views as far down Hillfoot Road adjacent to the junction with Hanscombe End Road. As well as being forward of the building line, the contrast of the traditional character of the appeal site with more modern dwellings adjacent means that I found the property visually prominent within its site context. The southeast, side, elevation is also prominent in views coming down Hillfoot Road from the opposite direction, past the junction with two further spurs of Hillfoot Road, but this elevation and general views from that direction would be largely unaffected by the proposals.
7. The appeal proposal seeks to undertake varying works to the appeal site which would consist of raising the roof of the existing gabled side extension, the addition of a first-floor link extension between the original building and later addition as well as demolition of an existing flat roof side extension with its replacement with a two-storey gabled side extension. It can be seen, particularly from plan 22-H12-PC3 that the proposed ridge height would exceed that of the host building with the ridge height quoted, as existing, I find to be largely associated with the ridge height of no. 18 to the rear, which is orientated at 90 degrees to the host dwelling.
8. I find that raising the roof of the previous side extension, in excess of the original ridge height, and the introduction of a new first floor link would fundamentally alter the building's appearance within the street scene. It would notably change the character of the property which currently presents as two parts with a modest link contributing to the overall traditional cottage character of the host dwelling. This would then be combined with a two-storey gable side extension. I acknowledge that the two-storey gable side extension would replace the flat roof extension which is not necessarily characteristic taking into account the host property. Despite this, the existing flat roof extension is of neutral impact to the appearance of the appeal site within the street scene due to the presence of outbuildings, vegetation, and boundary treatments. Whilst the existing flat roof extension is uncharacteristic for the host dwelling itself, I do not find that, in this case, its replacement with a two-storey gable side addition at the scale proposed is justified in terms of an improvement.
9. The proposed changes to the northwest elevation would be significant. The two-storey gable side extension would appear as a dominant feature with a ridge height which would match the existing ridge height of the host dwelling and would result in complete remodelling of the roofscape which is currently characterised by two modest dormer windows set in away from the sides of the existing roof. The proposal, by contrast, whilst it does appear to reduce the size of a dormer would introduce a gable projection which would alter the character and appearance of the host dwelling within wide ranging views within the street scene along Hillfoot Road. The proposal would not appear subservient to the original dwelling as it would visually dominate the side elevation with this being further exacerbated by the proposed side extension

eaves being set above the eaves of the original building which contributes to unbalanced appearance and supports that the scale of the proposals would be, overall, excessive for a modest character building which is a non-designated heritage asset.

10. The proposal would, ultimately, obscure the original form and character of the host building as a modest one and a half storey cottage which I find would cause unacceptable harm to its traditional character as well as dominate the appearance of the dwelling in longer views of the side elevation along Hillfoot Road. Regardless of whether the host dwelling was a non-designated heritage asset or not, I find that the design of the proposals, combined with the bulk, scale and massing, is inappropriate for the host dwelling in its most basic form taking into account the existing proportions of the appeal site. The proposal seeks to exceed the ridge height of the host property, overall, and the two-storey side gable extension would match the existing ridge height with an eave height which is higher than the host dwelling which creates a dominant, ill proportioned, proposal when viewed in the context of the existing characteristics of the host dwelling.
11. A photograph contained within the appeal statement (heritage statement) shows a view to the frontage of 20 Hillfoot Road from the southwest. It can be seen from this image and drawing number 22-H12-PC3 that the existing ridge heights of the proposal are broadly consistent and neither side, around the existing link, particularly competes with each other retaining the character cottage appearance. The proposal to raise the roof on the existing gabled side extension would result in a ridge height consistent with the ridge height of no. 18 (adjacent to the chimneys in the photograph) which I find demonstrates how visually dominant this increase in roof height would be resulting in an overall negative impact to the character of the cottage like dwelling. This would further be exacerbated by the first-floor link extension between the original building and the later addition from this viewpoint.
12. Whilst the footprint would not be altered, I find that the bulk, height, scale and details proposed would change the building unacceptably and I find that the proposed view looking north demonstrated in the appellant's photomontage generated on the 7th February 2024 fails to fully reflect the proposal in terms of overall height given that drawing 22-H123-PC3 specifically shows the increased ridge height to be consistent with what is labelled as the existing building ridge associated with no. 18. No. 18, is, as noted within the heritage appeal statement, a taller rear cross wing to the appeal site yet the proposal seeks to match the ridge height of the rear cross wing not the host dwelling itself. The proposal would exceed the height of the roof of the original part of the building creating cumulative extensions which would completely dominate the original building, and the building as it stands, which has been sympathetically extended to date notwithstanding perhaps the uncharacteristic nature of the flat roof side extension but, as outlined, this has limited impact overall due to its modest scale and limited visibility within the street scene.
13. I find that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the non-designated heritage asset which, with a balanced judgement, I find is sufficient to warrant refusal having regard to the scale of harm which has been outlined but also the character and appearance of the appeal site within the wider street scene due to the site's prominent location. Cumulatively the extensions are not insignificant and, based upon the evidence before me, the

benefits arising from the proposal are private benefits to the occupants of the dwelling seeking to achieve more habitable space within the property. At this stage, based upon the evidence before me, I would consider that it is likely that the appellant's could achieve more habitable space within the property but in a manner which is of a scale more in keeping with a traditional, cottage like, character of the host dwelling.

14. It is acknowledged that extensions and alterations to heritage (and non-designated) assets are undertaken as part of the inevitable process of change to meet current day to day requirements. Such buildings are noted as sometimes needing sympathetic alteration, adaptation, or extension to ensure their continuing usefulness, however, from the proposals before me I do not find to be modest, sympathetic new works which positively contribute to the building's story. Conservation indeed is about positive change, and a pragmatic and flexible approach is important, however, in this case I do not find that the character of the building would be respected, and this would, in turn, carry implications as a result of change to both character and appearance of the building itself as within wider views along the street scene as outlined.
15. The proposal would be contrary to Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2021 (LP) Policy HQ1 which seeks to ensure all developments are of the highest possible quality and respond positively to their context where scale, size, massing, orientation, materials, and appearance relate well to the existing local surroundings. The proposal would also be contrary to LP Policy HE3 which outlines that development proposals affecting non designated heritage assets of local importance will be granted provided they preserve the setting of the asset and its historic significance and where possible preserve, sustain and enhance the special character, significance, appearance and/or special architectural or historic interest of the assets in terms of scale, form, proportion design, materials and the retention of features in accordance with National Policy and legislation.
16. LP Policy HE3 also highlights that where development proposals will lead to harm to designated or non-designated heritage assets, they will be assessed against the relevant criteria in the Framework, taking into account the scale of harm and the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. I have considered this as outlined above in terms of harm and associated benefits.
17. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance set out within the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide 2023 which advises that extensions to dwelling should appear subordinate and subservient to the main building and, in the context of heritage settings, advises that it is crucial that the size of any proposed extensions or additions... to not dominate, overpower, or overwhelm the original or existing building and its setting. Extensions should be subservient and should respect the former character of the building and should not obscure the interpretation of the buildings original function. In this case the proposal fails to be consistent with these requirements and guidance and overarching objectives.

Other Matters

18. I note a third-party objection to the proposal, however, I have dealt with the points raised within this within the main body of this decision letter. I have no evidence before me to suggest, nor does the Council's refusal reason, that the

proposal would impact upon other properties in this case with regard to overlooking.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons outlined above, and taking account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR