



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 June 2024

by Anne Jordan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/D/24/3340390

Driftwood, Hannafore Road, West Looe, Cornwall, PL13 2DA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Geoff Bracey against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA23/08136.
 - The development proposed is described as "roof alterations to form habitable accommodation".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal property lies within the Looe Conservation Area and within a short distance of the Grade II* Listed Church of St Nicolas. The area is also covered by an Article 4 direction which restrict permitted development rights for a range of alterations to properties. The description of development refers solely to roof alterations to form habitable accommodation. The submitted plans show window alterations at ground floor level and I noted on site that these works had been completed. However, as these works are not included in the description of development, and did not form part of the reasons for refusal I have not considered them as part of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue for the appeal is the effect of the proposal on the setting of the Grade II* Listed Church of St Nicolas and whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Looe Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. S16(2) and S66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. S72(1) of the Act requires special attention to be had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area. Together Policies 1, 2, 12 and 24 of the Cornwall Local Plan seek to ensure that the design of development is high quality and enhances Cornwall's distinctive historic character by sustaining designated heritage assets and take opportunities to better reveal their significance. The Plan also seeks to maintain the special character and appearance of Conservation Areas and that alterations to listed buildings respect the building's character and appearance and preserve, restore or complement its features of special

architectural or historic interest. Policy TC1 of the Looe Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that any new development responds positively to local identity and distinctiveness. These policies reflect the statutory duties defined in the Act.

5. St Nicholas's Church is a Grade II* listed building. Parts of the structure dates from the 12th century and the building was renovated in the 1800's, most recently in 1862. It is constructed in rubble with chamfered stone surrounds and narrow high-level windows. The building sits at quay level with residential development sitting on the hillside above the building due to the steeply sloping topography around the site. In these views the high-pitched slate roof and the ornate bell-tower, with its pyramidal roof, are prominently visible against the varied streetscape which rises up the hillside. The significance of the asset lies in its status as a well-preserved example of an ecclesiastical building that has been adapted over time and in the antiquity of parts of its fabric. It also makes a positive visual contribution to the character of the area and the Neighbourhood Plan identifies St Nicholas's Church as a key building in the Looe Conservation Area.
6. The appeal property is a modest bungalow with a hipped roof which sits in an elevated position above Hannaford Road. In views of the bell-tower across the dock the bungalow is not a notable feature, due to the modest proportions of the bungalow, and the fact that the roof slopes away from view with the tower in the foreground. The buildings that make up the wider streetscape are of mixed age and style, but those that contribute most positively to the streetscene typically have modest window openings, with a high proportion of solid to void.
7. The development proposes the replacement of the roof with a gabled profile that would be higher than the existing roofline, and the front elevation of which would include a large area of glazing and a Juliet balcony. In key views of the church and the bell-tower across the dock, and in the approach from the south travelling downhill towards the church, the proposed extension would be visible in shared views. In these views the visual effect of the increase in the bulk of the roof would be accentuated by the extent to which the front elevation of the extension would be glazed. As a result, the roof extension would be notably visible in the streetscene and would form an intrusive and detracting feature within these key views.
8. I note that within the streetscene there are examples of prominently visible dormers with large amounts of glazing, particularly along the quayside. However, these examples are themselves detracting elements within the Conservation Area which do not, to my mind, negate the incremental harm to the established character of the area the proposal before me would cause. I am therefore of the view that the proposal would cause harm to both the setting of the listed church and the character of the Conservation Area.
9. I consider the level of harm caused to the significance of the heritage assets to be less than substantial. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) directs that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. I therefore attribute considerable importance and weight to this harm, which the Framework also indicates should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

10. I note that the proposal forms part of the refurbishment of the property which would improve the accommodation and amenity space within the dwelling and thus part of the overall housing stock. It would also improve the energy efficiency of the dwelling. However, I have no evidence that this benefit could not be achieved by a more visually sympathetic proposal and this limits the weight I attribute to these benefits.
11. Framework is clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and that in considering the impact of development on the significance of heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and that any harm should require clear and convincing justification. I therefore attribute great weight to the harm which would arise to the significance of the listed church and to part of the Looe Conservation Area as a result of this proposal and find the benefits identified to be insufficient to outweigh this harm. It follows that the proposal fails to comply with national policy outlined in the revised Framework. It would also fail to comply with the requirements of Policies 1, 2, 12 and 24 of the Cornwall Local Plan and TC1 of the Looe Neighbourhood Plan which together seek to ensure that the design of development is high quality and ensures new development sustains and enhances the significance of heritage assets.

Conclusion

12. The proposal would fail to comply with the development plan, taken as a whole. No material considerations indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons outlined above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

Anne Jordan

INSPECTOR