



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 5 March 2024

by O S Woodward BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 July 2024

Appeal A - Ref: APP/J1915/W/23/3325870

Meesden Corner Cottage, Brent Pelham, Hertfordshire SG9 0AR

- 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 Perrin against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/22/2143/HH, dated 11 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 23 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is the creation of a single storey rear extension and associated sunken terrace and removal of wall and window, a porch to the main elevation, demolition of part of the north extension to be replaced by a new extension, along with a remodelled store room to create a bathroom, the removal of part of a dividing wall between the Piano Room and the store room, and new partition walls within a 1st floor bedroom.
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Appeal B - Ref: APP/J1915/Y/23/3325873

Meesden Corner Cottage, Brent Pelham, Hertfordshire SG9 0AR

- 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 Mr and Mrs Perrin against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/22/2144/LBC, dated 11 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 23 June 2023.
 - The works proposed are the creation of a single storey rear extension and associated sunken terrace and removal of wall and window, a porch to the main elevation, demolition of part of the north extension to be replaced by a new extension, along with a remodelled store room to create a bathroom, the removal of part of a dividing wall between the Piano Room and the store room, and new partition walls within a 1st floor bedroom.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. Since the applications were determined a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been released. The changes were not material to the appeal and I have reflected the revised Framework as appropriate throughout my Decision.

4. The appeal proposal relates to a Grade II listed building located in the Brent Pelham Conservation Area (the CA). I have therefore had due regard to my statutory duties as set out at s16, s66 and s72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act).
5. I have amended the descriptions of development to better describe the proposed works.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II listed building, 'Meesden Corner Cottage'¹ (Appeals A and B), and on the character and appearance of the area including whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA (Appeal A).

Reasons

Existing

7. Meesden Corner Cottage is a Grade II listed building. It is a 17th Century cottage. The original part of the cottage is timber framed, rendered and with a thatched roof and timber casement windows. It has been extended and altered, particularly in the 20th Century, with additions to the north and west. The northern extension is single storey, weatherboarded and has a slate roof. The western extension is two-storeys, partly weatherboarded and partly rendered, and with clay tiled roofs.
8. The significance of the building is largely in its original part, with historic external fabric including render, timber framing and a thatched roof. The front elevation is particularly well composed and attractive, as well as retaining significant historic fabric. Internally, this part of the building retains extensive historic fabric and, largely at least, its original plan form. The two extensions are relatively unassuming and subservient, particularly because the two-storey extension is to the rear, and are legible as more modern additions. There is a distinct change in character between the original part of the building and the extensions. They make a neutral contribution to the significance of the building.
9. The CA covers much of the Brent Pelham village. It includes a range of building types and styles, materials and roof forms, dating from the 14th to 20th centuries. Many of the buildings are either listed or are buildings of local merit, and include a manor house and a church. The significance of the CA derives from its pleasing mixture of building types and styles, many of high architectural and historic interest, and from the organic development and growth of the village over time. The cottage is situated on a corner plot and is well-screened by hedgerows from the surrounding roads, but it is still visible including from the main road running through the village. The building contributes positively to the significance of the CA because it is a building of high architectural and historic interest, and particularly from the attractive front elevation and thatched roof.

¹ List entry No 1101917

Proposed

10. It is proposed to: construct a timber entrance porch with reclaimed slate roof to the main front elevation over the existing front entrance door; demolish the northernmost part of the existing north extension and replace it with an extension that projects further back to the rear; and erect a conservatory extension to the existing west extension with associated sunken terrace and steps within the garden.
11. In terms of internal works: the existing utility room within the retained element of the north extension would be remodelled to provide a bathroom; a new entrance door is proposed within the retained element of the north extension; the ground floor window and most of the external wall at ground floor level in the north elevation of the west extension would be removed to provide access to the conservatory; part of an historic wall within the original part of the cottage would be removed to expose the studwork; and, partition walls and a door would be inserted into one of the bedrooms within the 1st floor of the original part of the cottage to create an independent access point to an existing bedroom.

Assessment

12. The proposed conservatory and sunken terrace are not in dispute between the parties. The conservatory would be a lightweight addition at ground floor level to the rear of the property, to be accessed from the modern west extension. The sunken terrace would only involve a fairly shallow excavation to the existing ground levels and is also to the rear of the property. I therefore agree that these elements would not be harmful.
13. The demolition of part of the north extension would also be acceptable in principle. However, the replacement extension would be out of scale with the existing cottage, particularly from its significant projection to the rear. In addition, the existing extension is timber clad with very limited glazing which, in conjunction with its relatively small size, retains its subservience to the original part of the cottage. However, the proposed extension includes fairly extensive glazing, particularly in the return corner but also to the north elevation. Also, the proposed extension would include a relatively large pitched roof with prominent gable ends. These elements would be out of keeping with the character of the cottage and would emphasise the scale of the extension, exacerbating the harm caused.
14. The proposed extension would also harm the character and appearance of the CA, both because the extension would be visible, albeit heavily screened, from the primary road through the village, and from the intrinsic harm to one of the buildings that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the CA.

Conclusion

15. Therefore, the proposed north extension would harm the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the CA. That there are other elements of the proposal that would be acceptable does not mitigate this harm. The proposal therefore fails to comply with policies HA1, HA4, HA7, HOU11 and DES4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 (the DP). The policies require high quality design, and that proposals preserve or enhance heritage assets in accordance with the provisions of the Framework.

Other Matters

16. Whilst I note that no objection is raised to the proposed porch, I do not share that view because the front elevation of the original part of the cottage is attractive and well proportioned. The proposed porch would harm this by projecting beyond the original front elevation, harming the existing, unassuming and flat profile, and being an overly dominant addition to this important elevation. It would also have an awkward junction with the bottom of the thatched roof because the porch roof would directly abut the thatch.
17. The proposed internal works are also not in dispute between the parties. I largely agree that they would be acceptable. However, it is proposed to remove significant elements of an internal wall between the Piano Room and store room. Although this might reveal studwork which would retain a visual separation and demarcation of the store room from the main living area of the Piano Room, it would result in the loss of fabric in the building. The wall appears to be historic and no substantiated evidence has been provided of the importance or age of this fabric. In addition, the proposed partition walls within the 1st floor bedroom would harm the current layout by introducing a vestibule type area and leaving a bedroom with an awkward L-shape layout.
18. Had the northern extension not been determinative I would have asked the parties to comment further on those matters before coming to my decision on those aspects of the scheme. Given I shall refuse the proposal because of the northern extension little would be gained by delaying this matter to seek further comment on those other elements of the scheme.

Planning Balance

19. I assess the level of harm to be less than substantial. As set out at Paragraph 208 of the Framework, where the proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
20. The property is a substantial family home that is currently occupied. There is no indication, or reason to believe, that any of the proposed works are necessary to secure the ongoing viable use of the home. With regard to public benefits, they would be extremely limited, because the proposal would only result in slightly larger house. They would not, therefore, outweigh the harm to both the listed building and the CA that I have identified, and to which I attach great weight.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons above, Appeal A is dismissed.
22. For the reasons above, Appeal B is dismissed.

O S Woodward
INSPECTOR