



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 March 2025

by **K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/D/24/3357404

4 Chapel Close, Little Thetford, Cambridgeshire, CB6 3HS

- 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 Andrew Dickson against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00767/FUL.
 - The development proposed is a one and a half storey linked extension and alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a one and a half storey linked extension and alterations at 4 Chapel Close, Little Thetford, Cambridgeshire, CB6 3HS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/00767/FUL, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site location plan, 862/24/01, /02, /03, /04, /05, /06, /07.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be as specified on the approved plans and the application form.

Main Issues

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a large open plot on the edge of a village. It is accessed via a narrow driveway from Chapel Close, a small cul-de-sac of modern, two storey dwellings. It is bounded by hedgerow and trees and there are a number of trees within the site. It has a rural character. Existing buildings comprise the appeal dwelling together with various garages and outbuildings.
4. The appeal dwelling is a C18-19 single storey linear cottage with a modern rear extension projecting from about one third of the rear elevation and wrapping round one end. The cottage is constructed of painted brick with casement windows and a replacement corrugated sheet roof. It is not listed and is in a poor state of repair.

5. The Council's Conservation Officer describes it as a rare, largely intact, survival of a traditional Fenland cottage. It has been identified for inclusion in the East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) register of buildings of local interest under Policy ENV13 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) (LP). The site does not lie within a conservation area. The cottage is therefore a non-designated heritage asset.
6. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that the effect of a development proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset.
7. Although at present the cottage is not on the ECDC register of buildings of local interest and I have no evidence regarding the expected timescales for the list to be updated, I have had regard to Policy ENV13 as a material consideration. This states, amongst other things, that development that would have a detrimental impact on the visual, architectural or historic significance of an asset through the inappropriate alteration or extension of buildings on the register will be resisted.
8. The Council's Design Guide supplementary planning document (SPD) 2012, provides guidance on extensions. In general, it advises that the size of the original dwelling will determine the extent to which it can be enlarged but that in any case the original building should still be clearly legible following extension. In most circumstances an extension will need to be subservient to the existing dwelling. In the context of the historic environment, the SPD provides further advice. In particular, extensions should protect the character and appearance of the building and should be of high quality design. With respect to small buildings, the SPD recognises that these present challenges with regard to the scale of extensions and that they often need to be extended to give them purpose and secure them in active use. It is suggested that the construction of a low link, often in glass, is an effective way of maintaining the visual integrity of the original building.
9. The proposed development would involve the removal of the modern rear extension. This would enhance the original cottage by removing an unsympathetic structure that detracts from the original simple linear layout of the building. The original cottage would be restored, and internal alterations would be carried out to create a sitting room and guest bedroom at either end with a new hallway between. This would connect the front door to a rear link extension that would be noticeably smaller and lower than either the cottage or the existing rear extension, and substantially glazed on the more prominent south facing elevation. It would leave either end of the original cottage clearly visible.
10. The link extension would provide access between the original cottage and a 1.5 storey extension. This would be noticeably wider and higher than the original cottage and about two thirds its length. It would have two bedrooms in the roof space, lit by three modest, traditional dormer windows, together with a kitchen/dining room at ground floor. It would be arranged at 90° to the original cottage.
11. I agree with the Council that the 1.5 storey extension would appear much bigger than the original cottage, mainly due to its height which would be readily apparent and clearly seen from the public footpath which follows the southern boundary of

the site. However, in my view, this is a case where the small size of the original cottage makes its continued use as a dwelling less certain unless it is significantly enlarged. Its rarity and degree of preservation add weight to this possibility since it suggests that other similar cottages may have been subsumed by extensions or demolished to enable larger dwellings, more suited to modern families. A pragmatic planning judgement is therefore required. The key to the success of an extension will be in its sympathetic treatment of the host dwelling. The proposed extension would be a large addition, but its separation from the cottage by way of the low link, in accordance with the SPD, would ensure that the cottage remained intact and readable in its original form. The development would thus preserve or enhance its architectural and historic significance.

12. The proposed extension would be finished in timber feather edged boarding in pewter, whilst the cottage would be rendered and painted cream. This would assist in adding prominence to the cottage whilst minimising that of the extension. In addition, since feather boarding is traditionally associated with rustic ancillary buildings such as barns, it would suggest a hierarchy despite its size, and in particular its greater height. Finally, the extension is sympathetically designed and would be a modest and harmonious addition in the context of the large open plot and the rural edge setting. I therefore consider that it would not be materially detrimental to the character or appearance of the cottage or the appeal site.
13. The proposed extension would cause a low level of harm to the visual significance of the non-designated heritage asset due to its scale. However, it would preserve the essential linear form of the cottage and help to secure its refurbishment and continued use as a dwelling in a largely intact form. Moreover, it would result in a visually attractive development that was sympathetic to local character and history whilst introducing appropriate innovation. I therefore find on balance that it would be acceptable.
14. It is concluded on the main issue that the proposed extension would have no materially detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the host dwelling or the surrounding area, and the limited harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset would be outweighed by other material considerations. The proposed development would therefore comply with the NPPF and with Policy ENV2 which expects, amongst other things, that new development should be designed to a high quality, enhancing and complementing local distinctiveness by relating well to existing features, and introducing appropriate new designs. It would also substantially comply with LP Policy ENV13.
15. Turning to conditions, in addition to the statutory commencement condition, I agree that the development should be carried out in accordance with the approved plans in order to provide certainty, and that it should be carried out in the specified materials in order to protect the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area. Since the materials would not all match the existing dwelling, I shall adjust the wording of the standard condition accordingly.
16. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the support of third parties, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR