



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2025

by **C Livingstone MA(SocSci) (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/24/3353062

Old School, Wingates Main Road, Northumberland NE65 8RW

- 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 Thomas Edward Hird against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01804/FUL.
 - The development proposed is a rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised on 12 December 2024. As the changes do not materially affect the main issues in this case, the parties have not been invited to comment further. Where references are made to paragraph numbers of the Framework, these are references to the most recent version.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character, appearance and significance of Old School as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA).

Reasons

Character, Appearance and Significance

4. The appeal site is located within Wingates a small rural village, mostly made up a small number of large dwellings as well as some agricultural buildings. Most buildings are constructed from local sandstone with slate roofs, which give the village an attractive, traditional character. Notwithstanding this, there are examples of the use of render on buildings fronting the road and on rear extensions. The appeal relates to Old School which is a modest single storey dwelling that has been extended to the rear. The original building was the former village school and is constructed from local sandstone with a slate roof.
5. Whilst there is some confusion over the status of the appeal property, the Built Heritage and Design Team comments detailed in the Officer Report state that it is considered to be a NDHA.
6. Planning Practice Guidance advises that clear and up to date information on NDHAs should be made accessible to the public to provide greater clarity and

certainty for developers and decision makers¹. It also states that in some cases, local planning authorities may also identify NDHAs as part of the decision-making process on planning applications.

7. I have not been made aware of a local list of NDHAs, and there is limited supporting information in respect of the host property being a NDHA. Nevertheless, Old School, which was built in the mid 19th century, is a well preserved example of a small, purpose built, Victorian village school. The building includes high quality decorative detailing and was constructed from local sandstone with a slate roof, this reflects other properties within Wingates which appear as a cohesive group.
8. I consider that Old Schools original use, setting, pleasing architectural composition, fine detailing and use of traditional materials give it heritage and architectural significance and aesthetic value within the street scene. On this basis I find its designation as a NDHA is reasonable. Old Schools significance as a NDHA, as it relates to this appeal, is therefore largely derived from it being a fine example of Victorian public architecture, as a small village school.
9. The appeal is for the erection of a single storey extension on the rear elevation of Old School. The design includes a narrow section that would hip into the roof of the host property before widening to form a larger rear wing. The side elevations would be finished in reconstituted stone and the rear elevation would be finished in render. The pitch of the rear wing would be shallower than the main building, and the proposed windows would have a contemporary appearance and a horizontal emphasis.
10. The rear extension would project several metres from the existing rear elevation and would significantly increase the footprint of the original building. Even though it would be lower than the main body of the building the scale and massing of the proposed extension is such that it would dominate the original building which is relatively modest. The 'L' shaped design breaks up the built form, to a degree, and limits its point of contact with the original building. However, this doesn't overcome the harmful impact of the extension in terms of its overall size and prominence, which is exacerbated by the extent of its projection from the rear elevation.
11. The shallower pitch of the rear wing fails to reflect the pitch of the main building, this difference would be clearly visible when viewed from the side elevation where both pitches would be visible. The shallow roof pitch along with the proposed window design, fail to reflect the traditional character of the original building which has a steeper roof pitch and windows with a vertical emphasis.
12. Based on the evidence before me I am not certain that the proposed reconstituted stone would suitably reflect the local sandstone used in the construction of the host property and other buildings in the village. As detailed above, there are examples of the use of render as an external finish on rear extensions in the area and I have no concerns in this regard.
13. Overall, the proposal would not read as a subordinate addition to Old School and would not relate well to it in terms of design and external materials. This would result in an incongruous addition that would fail to make a positive contribution to local character. My concerns in this regard are not mitigated by its limited visibility from the public realm or the size of the extension relative to the overall plot.

¹ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 18a-040-20190723

14. In line with paragraph 216 of the Framework I am required to make a balanced judgment in assessing the effect of development on the significance of a NDHA, which should have regard to the scale of any harm and the asset's significance. The scale and design of the proposed extension is such that it would dominate Old School and fail to respect its traditional character as an example of a small Victorian village school. Therefore, I consider that it would cause moderate harm to the significance of the NDHA and the positive contribution that it makes to the character and appearance of the area.
15. For the reasons detailed above the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character, appearance and significance of the host property as a NDHA. Therefore, it is contrary to Policies QOP 1, QOP 2, HOU 9, ENV 1 and ENV 7 of the Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036, which require that new development should make a positive contribution to local character and the physical presence and design of the development preserves the character of the area. They also require that householder extensions are well related and subordinate in size to the existing dwelling and that non-designated heritage assets are given appropriate protection.

Other Matters

16. A Daytime Bat Walkover Survey prepared by Tyne Ecology dated August 2024 was submitted to the Council when the planning application was at an advanced stage. I note that the Council considered that the development was unacceptable for reasons that could not be resolved through a minor change. In light of this, the Council Ecologist was not re-consulted, and the findings of the survey were not included as part of the report. As this information was not critical to the outcome of the planning application, the Council's approach was reasonable.
17. The appellant pointed out that Old School could be extended without the need for planning permission. Be that as it may, in my view any such extension would not be as substantial as the proposal now before me.
18. The appeal scheme includes some alterations to the roof which may improve an existing damp problem. However, I am not certain that the proposed development would be the only means to resolve this issue or preserve the building. I note the reasons why the appellant wants a larger house, but little weight can be attached to such personal circumstances.
19. I have been referred to several other developments in the area which included the extension of dwellings. However, I do not have full details of the circumstances that led to these proposals being accepted and so cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal, including in respect of scale, design and development plan policy. In any case I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
20. I note that Nunnykirk Parish Councillors fully support the proposed development. While their support is a material consideration it is of insufficient weight to outweigh the harm identified which is contrary to the development plan as a whole.
21. The Council raised no concerns in regard to the impact of the development on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties. I have no reason to disagree with the Council on this matter. However, a lack of harm in this regard is a neutral factor in my assessment of the appeal, weighing neither for nor against the proposal.

22. The appellant's comments relating to the Council's conduct prior to the determination of the planning application are noted. Whether this amounted to working in a positive and proactive manner is not a matter that fundamentally affects the outcome of this appeal. Concerns relating to conduct are best addressed through direct engagement with the Council.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

C Livingstone

INSPECTOR