



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2025

by **K Stephens BSc (Hons) MTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 August 2025.

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/Y/25/3362733

Grassmere, Elmley Road, Ashton Under Hill, Worcestershire WR11 7SW

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
- The appeal is made by Mr A Cooke against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
- The application Ref is W/23/00672/LB.
- The works proposed are Replacement of existing rear extension with new extension. Demolition of existing garage and replacement with new garage and annexe over.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the proposal relates solely to works to a listed building that is also located within a conservation area, sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act) require me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
3. I see from the submitted evidence, including the publicity, that an associated planning application¹ was also submitted, but no appeal to this has been lodged. The proposed replacement detached garage does not involve works to a listed building and therefore does not require listed building consent. For the avoidance of doubt, my considerations and conclusions in this appeal relate solely to the proposed rear extension to the listed building itself.
4. The application was refused before the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published². The appeal was lodged and appeal documentation submitted after this date. Whilst Framework paragraph numbers have changed, the document has not raised any new matters which are determinative to this appeal. I have had regard to the revised Framework in reaching my decision.
5. The appeal form identifies Grassmere as a Grade I listed building. However, it is clear from the official listing description³ that it is a Grade II listed building, known as 'Grassmere Cottage', and other appeal documentation refers to it as such.

¹ LPA ref: W/23/00671/HP

² 19 December 2024

³ National Heritage List for England: list entry number 1167281

6. Whilst the start of the appellant's appeal statement refers to the appeal site and proposal, much of the document then appears to refer to a different site ('on a prominent corner') and a different proposal (a 'single storey dwelling'). Furthermore, the refusal reason replicated in the appellant's appeal statement is totally different to that on the Council's decision notice and refers to Honeybourne, which is a different village.

Main Issues

7. The main issues are whether the proposal would: i) preserve the Grade II listed building known as Grassmere Cottage, or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and ii) preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Ashton under Hill Conservation Area (the AuHCA).

Reasons

Special interest and significance of the heritage assets

8. Grassmere Cottage is a single storey dwelling with attic and dormers dating from the late 16th century. An additional single bay was added in the 20th century, as was a lean-to along the full length of the rear elevation. The property is timber framed with rendered infill on a limestone rubble base, a half-hipped thatched roof and thatched porch. I saw that internally some of the timber framing is exposed and the property largely retains its historic internal floor plan and some historic features, such as the large fireplace described in the listing. Thus, the special interest and significance of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, are largely derived from a combination of its historic and architectural interests as an example of a late 16th century vernacular domestic property within a rural village. The building's age, surviving historic fabric and features, legibility of its historic floorplan and use of traditional construction and materials make important contributions in these regards.
9. The building also has group value with other dwellings in the row as part of the street scene of Elmley Road, which is the principal road through the village, including the adjacent timber framed, thatched roof cottage, known as Old Beams, which is also Grade II listed⁴.
10. The appeal site is also located within the AuHCA, which contains a number of listed buildings of different scale and type, including St Barbara's Church, the Manor House, a number of old farmhouses, and timber framed and other thatched dwellings. From the evidence before me and what I saw during my site visit, I consider the character and appearance of the AuHCA, and thus its special interest and significance, are in part derived from the architectural richness and variety of its surviving historic buildings and building materials, street pattern and the relationship of its buildings and spaces that reflect the economic and social development of this rural village. Grassmere Cottage is an important and visually prominent component of the townscape within the AuHCA and an integral part of the history of the village. With its heritage merit and aesthetic charm, Grassmere Cottage positively contributes to the character and appearance of the AuHCA as a whole and thereby to its significance as a designated heritage asset.

⁴ National Heritage List for England: list entry number 1081671

Appeal proposal and effects

11. At present a single storey modern extension extends along the entire rear elevation of the property. It has a shallow mono-pitched roof, with large modern concrete tiles. The roof ridge of the existing extension finishes just below the eaves of the thatched roof. I saw that the external timber frame rear wall of the property forms the internal wall of the existing extension and kitchen, and the inside windows gave borrowed light into the living and dining rooms in the historic plan form of the property.
12. The proposal would involve a replacement extension to provide an enlarged kitchen and improved internal space. The proposed extension would approximately follow the alignment of the existing extension along the rear of the property. However, the proposal would also include an additional extension, of a largely square configuration, that would project out into the garden and create an 'L-shaped' floor plan. The projecting part of the extension would be similar in depth to the historic part of the property. As a result, the extension would alter the hierarchy of the building and create an unduly large and over dominant extension to the property. The extent of the L-shaped format would also disrupt the simple linear and modest proportions of the host property, especially when seen from the side elevations and rear garden.
13. There would be a flat roof over the entire extension with parapet sides and lantern rooflights. The removal of the mono-pitched roof would reveal more of the timber framed historic exterior wall of the property and allow the thatched eaves to be seen in better isolation. There would also be the removal of the inappropriate modern concrete tiles. However, the extent of flat roof on a substantial L-shaped extension would be an incongruous addition to the property.
14. The two roof lanterns would project upwards and stand proud of the flat roof. Whilst glazed, they would nonetheless interfere with, and distract from the clean lines of the extension, the thatched roof, visually compete with the low-slung dormer windows and lessen the reveal of the timber framing and the thatched eaves.
15. Overall, I find the extension, by reason of its form, size, scale and design would be a significant visual disruption to the proportions, appearance and form of the property and represent an unsympathetic addition to the listed building. Whilst I have no reason to doubt the extension would be built to a high quality, the extension would alter the composition of the historic rear elevation and diminish the ability to appreciate the significance of the listed building. The proposal would thus fail to preserve the building's special interest and would harm the significance of this heritage asset.
16. Whilst the rear elevation and extension would not be visible from the street, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not close public views of the building can be gained.
17. In terms of the AuHCA, from my site visit observations the rear of Grassmere Cottage is not visible from the public right of way or from the road through the village due to its orientation, intervening development and surrounding mature landscaping. That said, it is one of a number of listed buildings within the AuHCA and an integral and important element of its character and appearance, as well as of the main street scene of the village. The harmful effects of the extension on the listed building I have identified would thus diminish the contribution it makes to the

AuHCA. Hence the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the AuHCA as a whole.

18. Whilst other listed buildings in the village may have been extended in various ways, I do not have the details, particulars or circumstances of those proposals. In any event I must consider the appeal proposal on its own merits.

Public benefits and heritage balance

19. The Framework identifies at paragraph 213 that any harm to, or loss of, significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. In finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, Framework paragraphs 214 and 215 require the magnitude of that harm to be assessed. Considering the nature and extent of the proposed development and the advice in the Framework and national Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) I find the harm to the significance of the listed building and the AuHCA would be 'less than substantial' and somewhere towards the middle-upper end of that category. Nonetheless, a finding of less than substantial harm still carries considerable importance and weight.
20. In line with paragraph 215 of the Framework, less than substantial harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the works. Public benefits, as described in the PPG, can be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives and do not have to be visible or publicly accessible. They can also include works to a listed private dwelling that secure its future as a designated heritage asset.
21. There would be some economic benefits to the wider local economy from jobs and spend during the construction phase, but this would be of limited duration and extent. The removal of the mono-pitched roof would enable more of the timber framed historic rear wall of the property to be seen. This would enable a greater appreciation of some of the aspects of the listed building and hence would be a betterment. Removal of the inappropriate modern concrete tiles on the existing mono-pitched roof would also be an improvement. These would be public benefits.
22. Public benefits can also include works to a designated heritage asset to help secure its future. The proposal would provide the appellant and their family with an enlarged kitchen and potentially more usable and functional space. I saw the property had a decent sized workable kitchen and there were rooms and space for dining. The proposed improvements would be the preference of the appellant and hence a private, not public, benefit.
23. Whilst there may be limited loss of historic fabric, as the proposal would replace a later addition, there are no details of how the extension would be attached to the rear of the building. I have considered whether I could impose conditions controlling these details. However, in my view the omitted information goes to the heart of understanding the proposed works, the impact on the historic fabric and any effects they may have on the special interest and significance of the listed building. Therefore, it would not be acceptable to leave such matters to condition.
24. There is no substantive evidence before me to satisfactorily demonstrate that the proposal is required to secure the continued use of the building as a dwelling or that the heritage asset would be at risk should the appeal fail. In all of these

respects, clear and convincing justification for the harm to the asset's significance has not been provided.

25. The limited public benefits identified above weigh in favour of the appeal. However, the weight I ascribe to them is not sufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and weight I attach to the harm that would occur to the significance of the listed building and the AuHCA.
26. Accordingly, I find the proposed works would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building, known as Grassmere Cottage, and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The proposal would also fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the AuHCA as a whole. The proposal would thus fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the relevant provisions of the Framework.
27. A Section 20 appeal does not need to be determined in accordance with the development plan. However, in the decision notice the Council state that the proposal would conflict with Policies SWDP6, SWDP21 and SWDP24 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan. Collectively these seek, amongst other things, to ensure that development conserves and enhances the significance of heritage assets, including their settings. Furthermore, new development should integrate effectively with, and complement, its surroundings and distinctive features or qualities that contribute to the visual and heritage interests of the area.

Conclusion

28. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Stephens
INSPECTOR