The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2023

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/22/3307683
Holme Farm, Red Road, Rakesdale, Alton, ST10 4BT

- 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 & Mrs M Wilkinson against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref SMD/2022/0283, dated 25 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 July 2022.
- The development proposed is extensions to improve the accommodation generally including additional bedrooms, relocated new sitting room and kitchen etc. including the replacement of the existing conservatory and front porch.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal dwelling is a quaint, traditional, low eaves cottage located in an isolated rural area and set into a steep hillside on the lower slope of a valley. It is double fronted with a central porch and first floor windows set into semi-dormers at eaves level. A popular public bridleway runs through the valley to the south-east of the site boundary, from which there are views of the dwelling. Another lies on higher ground to the north and north-west from where there may be some views. The cottage has evolved and been enlarged in the past, firstly by extending in brick up, over original stone walls, to create the double fronted appearance and through a rear extension under an extended asymmetrical roof slope. More recently, a uPVC porch and side conservatory have been added.

4. The proposal comprises removing the porch and conservatory and replacing these. The Council raises no objection to the proposed porch and I agree it would compliment the existing cottage. With regard to the conservatory, this would have a front facing gable and a roof materially higher than that of the existing conservatory. It would also have a larger footprint. In my view, its oak

framed construction would be sympathetic to the cottage and its rural, wooded location, and I find the front facing gable in keeping with the gables over the first floor dormers. However, the size of the conservatory and in particular its height and rearward projection would dominate the end elevation of the cottage and obscure its existing form when viewed from the east and north-east. This would detract from its character and appearance. The appellant argues that a similar sized conservatory could be built under permitted development rights but crucially this would need to be some 0.7m lower. Given the dimensions of the cottage, that reduction would be significant and would make a material difference in exposing more of the side elevation to view and limiting its detrimental effect. Although the end elevation is currently partially screened by vegetation, that could be removed in the future, exposing the cottage to view.

5. A two storey side extension is proposed at the opposite end of the cottage. The bank would have to be dug out to accommodate this but that would not affect the way in which the cottage is "hugged" by the hillside and would, in my view, be acceptable. Moreover, the design of the extension, with a semi-dormer to the front to match those existing and a width that would be clearly subservient, together with its substantial setback from the front elevation would make this a proportionate and acceptable addition when viewed from the front and side, including from the public bridleway. The Council states that the proposed oak board cladding would be at odds with the dwelling and suggests that it is not traditional in this area. However, in the context of this extension I find it a natural and acceptable material that would ensure that the extension was read as such, whilst harmonising with to the dwelling and its rural location. Moreover, I note that similar timber boarding has been used on an extension at Holm Cottage, a nearby listed building.

6. The two storey rear extension would project in three full height gables across the rear of the dwelling and join with the side extension making it a substantial and bulky addition. It would be finished mainly in wood boarding but also brick on the end elevation. However, the plans do not make clear how this would juxtapose with the existing stone side wall. Although windows under the end gables would be of a scale to match the existing fenestration, the central gable would be dominated by a large, full height glazed panel.

7. Overall this extension would dominate and detract from the rear elevation of the cottage which is currently simple and with low eaves. In particular, the much higher eaves, full two storey design and triple gabled roof would be at odds with the scale and appearance of the existing cottage, detracting from its quaintness. Furthermore, the extensive glazing below the central gable would be a strident and discordant modern feature that would, in the context of the poorly proportioned and bulky extension, be incongruous and unsympathetic to the age and traditional, low eaved design of the existing cottage.

8. The rear of the cottage is set into the hillside and this reduces its visibility. Moreover, public views of the rear would be limited. Nevertheless, the sections show that the proposed two storey rear extension would project above the level of the existing rear retaining wall, altering the way in which the cottage sits within the surrounding attractive landscape. Although this might not be extensively seen, it would detract from the intimate relationship between this small, traditional cottage and its surrounding, steeply sided valley location, materially diminishing its character and appearance.

9. The Government places significant emphasis on good design. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) expects development to be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and to be sympathetic to local character and history. These aims are reflected in Policies SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, 2020, (LP) which, taken together, expect extensions to existing dwellings in the rural area to be of a scale and design such that they do not have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling or the character of the rural area. In particular, extensions should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings through, amongst other things, appropriate scale, height, siting, character and appearance.

10. It is concluded on the main issue that, whilst the proposed new porch and two storey side extension would be acceptable, the proposed conservatory and two storey rear extension would, due to their scale, height and design have a materially detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding rural area. In consequence, they would conflict with LP Policies SS10, DC1 and DC3, with the NPPF and the Council's Design Guide, 2018.

11. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the lack of objectioin from the parish council, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K E Down
INSPECTOR