

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2016

**by David M H Rose BA (Hons) MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 13 February 2016**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/D/15/3137915**

**Batch End, 2 Yeld Bank, Church Stretton, Shropshire, SY6 6EZ**

- 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 Scott and Sue Mitchell against the decision of Shropshire Council.
  - The application reference 15/02642/FUL, dated 17 June 2015, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2015.
  - The development is described as 'proposed remodelling of existing ground floor and first floor extension'.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the appearance of the Church Stretton Conservation Area.

### Reasons

3. The Church Stretton Conservation Area has three main components comprising the early nuclear settlement; late Victorian and Edwardian properties; and post-war housing developments of varying types and sizes. It has a setting of striking topography, with the Stretton Hills to the east and Long Mynd to the west. The town and the surrounding landscape are within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
  4. Batch End is an undistinguished squat bungalow constructed of facing brick and timber cladding under a shallow pitched roof. It has similar, contemporary, neighbours some of which have a more pronounced position along Shrewsbury Road. Its wider surrounds include a hillside backdrop with a scatter of imposing, older, dwellings with steep roofs and attractive detailing.
  5. Although the proposed remodelling has been carefully conceived to minimise the bulk and height of the altered dwelling, its flat roof form, singular use of timber cladding and its extensive glazing would be at odds with the buildings in the immediate vicinity. Whilst variation is a characteristic of the locality, flat roofs and timber clad buildings are secondary in nature and fenestration tends towards subservience. The combined effects of this layered 'box-like' structure would result in a building of striking, uncharacteristic, outward appearance and a ready focus where none currently exists. To my mind, it would not achieve the stated objective of assimilating well against its wooded backdrop and blending into its surroundings.
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6. A key component of good design is the appreciation and understanding of context. In this regard, the bold and angular form of the building, and its atypical external materials, would not accord with Policy CS6 of the Adopted Core Strategy which requires new development to be appropriate in design, taking into account the local context and character; and the call in Policy CS17 for all development to contribute to local distinctiveness.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) acknowledges that planning decisions should not attempt to stifle innovation, originality or initiative; but it too seeks to reinforce local distinctiveness and to integrate new development into the natural, built and historic environment.
8. In this case, the proposed remodelling of the existing bungalow would not preserve or enhance the appearance of this part of the Church Stretton Conservation Area, and its contribution to the designated area as a whole. Although the resultant harm would be 'less than substantial', great weight should be given to the conservation of the designated asset.<sup>1</sup>
9. I have noted that the proposed development would preserve the spatial characteristics of the Conservation Area which is but one element in the consideration of the statutory duty. It is said that the appeal site is not located within any of the important spaces identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, or in views to or from those areas; and it is suggested that the project would not result in harm 'to the more important parts of the Conservation Area'. However, the statutory duty, and the guidance within the Framework, applies to the designated area as a whole.
10. It is also relevant to add that the failure to respect or strengthen local distinctiveness would run counter to the protection of the landscape and scenic beauty afforded to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
11. The enhanced thermal efficiency of the remodelled dwelling, and savings in fossil fuels, is a factor of little weight as there is no reason to suppose that similar results could not be achieved by a building more fitting for its surroundings. There would be no other public benefits arising from the proposal.
12. In summary, having considered all other matters raised and the balance required by the Framework, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the appearance of the Church Stretton Conservation Area. On this basis the appeal is dismissed.

*David MH Rose*

Inspector

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 132 & 134