



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 October 2017

by **A J Mageean BA (Hons) BPI PhD MRTPI**

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

Decision date: 16th October 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/D/17/3179651

Secret Cottage, Britons Lane, The Smithies, Bridgnorth, WV16 4SZ

- 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 T Hughes against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 17/01146/FUL, dated 8 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 18 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is a two storey extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area; and,
 - Whether the proposal would result in the loss of a smaller low cost market dwelling.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site comprises a detached property within a large plot in the dispersed settlement of Linley Brook. It is located on a north facing slope and is surrounded by a range of mature trees and shrubs. Dwellings in this local area vary in terms of their form and size, though most appear to be of traditional appearance. The settlement itself is classified as open countryside with the extent of green space and its mature landscape setting giving this area a rural character.
4. Whilst I understand that this was originally a 1.5 storey 19th Century cottage of modest size, it has been substantially extended. Most notably a 1.5 storey gable addition on its eastern side has more than doubled its original size. There is also a full width single storey addition to the rear, with a cat slide roof, with smaller single storey additions on either side elevation. However, whilst the size of the cottage has been more than doubled, when viewed from the front the overall cottage-style scale and modesty of appearance have prevailed. This is due to the largest gable addition being at right angles to the original property, with two modest windows in its front elevation, thereby retaining the visual emphasis on the original frontage.

5. The proposal would substantially increase the size and alter the appearance of the cottage by placing a new central entrance on what is currently the side gable addition and effectively replicating the appearance of the existing cottage on the eastern side. I accept that this addition would bring an overall symmetry to the building centred on the gable, and that design elements such as the eaves dormers and materials would resonate with the existing cottage. However, the resulting proportions of the building when viewed from its front elevation would appear overly long and in this sense incongruous. Whilst I accept that the new gable porch would create a focal point, this significant feature would draw attention away from the traditional elements of the cottage. Overall the scale of the proposed addition would dominate and subsume the character of those elements of the original cottage that remain.
6. The appellant argues that in this case it would not be appropriate to seek a subservient addition as the character of the original cottage has been lost, and that the proposal would create a property of different character. However, I have noted that the original character of the cottage remains visible and in this sense it is appropriate to apply those aspects of the Shropshire Core Strategy 2011 (CS) Policy CS6 and the Shropshire Site Allocation and Management of Development Plan 2015 (SAMDev) Policy MD2 which require new development to respect locally characteristic architectural design and details, taking into account their proportions and scale.
7. The appellant also argues that the resulting dwelling would not be materially larger than surrounding houses. Whilst I have noted that local properties vary in size and character, they are largely of traditional appearance. In this case my view is that the implementation of this scheme would result in the loss of the character of this modest dwelling.
8. I accept the appellant's point that the visibility of the appeal dwelling in public views from the surrounding area is limited by virtue of the trees surrounding this property. However, this point does not overcome the design concerns identified.
9. I have also had regard to the appellant's assertion that the proposal would comply with paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). This advises that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes. However, paragraph 58 of the Framework also advises that it is proper for planning policies and decisions to aim to respond to local character and promote local distinctiveness. As noted above, the proposal would not respect the character of the appeal building or wider area.
10. On this point I conclude that the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. In this respect it would conflict with the relevant aspects of the CS Policies CS6 and CS17 and the SAMDev Policy MD2 which, taken together, seek to ensure that development respects the local context and character of the built and natural environment. It would also conflict with the Council's Type and Affordability of Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which at paragraph 2.12 states the need to ensure that development is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the original building.

Loss of a smaller low cost market dwelling

11. The SPD paragraph 2.20 notes the trend in countryside locations towards providing larger and more expensive dwellings which can exclude the less well off, including those who need to live and work in rural areas. This guidance therefore advises that, in relation to both house extensions and replacement dwellings, it is important to control size in order to maintain and provide an appropriate stock of smaller low cost market dwellings.
12. I have noted that the appeal dwelling remains of reasonably modest size, though is located on a substantial plot. Whilst the appellant has not provided either a valuation of the existing property, nor comparative figures for other properties, I accept the point that in relative terms this does not appear to be a smaller or low cost dwelling.
13. As such, I do not consider that this scheme would result in the loss of a smaller low cost market dwelling and it would not conflict with the SPD in this regard.

Conclusion

14. Whilst I have accepted that this scheme would not result in the loss of a smaller low cost market dwelling, I have also concluded that the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area. Therefore, as material considerations do not indicate that I should conclude other than in accordance with the development plan taken as a whole, the appeal is dismissed.

AJ Mageean

INSPECTOR