
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 17 January 2017

by Mike Hayden BSc DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 3 February 2017

Appeal A: APP/Z2830/W/16/3157977

Hillcrest, Careys Road, Pury End, Northamptonshire NN12 7NX

- 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 Mrs R. de Courcy Ireland against the decision of South Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref S/2016/0143/FUL, dated 22 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is to take down existing house and build new house on existing site.
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Appeal B: APP/Z2830/W/16/3157987

Hillcrest, Careys Road, Pury End, Northamptonshire NN12 7NX

- 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 Mrs R. de Courcy Ireland against the decision of South Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref S/2016/0514/FUL, dated 16 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is to replace existing flat roof on garages with a pitched roof.
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Decision

1. **Appeal A is dismissed and Appeal B is dismissed.**

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mrs R. de Courcy Ireland against South Northamptonshire Council, which is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matter

3. As set out above there are two appeals on this site. I have considered each proposal on its individual merits. However, as the main issue is the same in both appeals, to avoid duplication I have dealt with the two proposals together in this decision letter.

Main Issues

4. The main issue in both appeals is the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located in the open countryside on the edge of the village of Pury End. The property comprises a 1950s detached two-storey house with a large single storey flat roofed garage. Due to their design and materials, both buildings are undistinguished in appearance. However, because of its siting, the property is a prominent feature in the landscape. The house sits on its own on the north-east side of Careys Road at the crest of a hill overlooking a valley to the east. It occupies an elevated position at the entrance to Pury End and is the first building to be seen, against the skyline, on approaching the village from the east. The house and the garage are also visible from Careys Road and from the adjacent fields and public footpaths to the north of the site.
6. Appeal A proposes a new dwelling to replace the existing house on site. Saved Policy H6 of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (1997) (the Local Plan) seeks to conserve the rural environment from unnecessary intrusions by restricting residential development in the open countryside to certain limited circumstances. This is consistent with paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which expects planning to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Policy H6 allows replacement dwellings in the open countryside where the existing property is outworn, structurally unstable and beyond economic repair, and the new dwelling occupies approximately the same footprint and is of the same general size as the original dwelling.
7. With regard to the condition of the building and whether it is beyond economic repair, I note the dispute over the structural survey. However, based on the evidence of the Council's pre-application advice, the principle of replacing the existing dwelling with something of better quality does not appear to be at issue, subject to the replacement dwelling satisfying the relevant policies and design guidance in terms of its scale and appearance. Accordingly, in this case I do not regard the structural condition of the building to be determinative.
8. However, the footprint of the proposed dwelling would be around 50-55% larger than that of the existing dwelling and the height of the building approximately 1.2 metres taller. As such the proposed dwelling would be neither 'approximately the same footprint' nor 'the same general size' as the existing dwelling as required in criterion (IV) A) and B) of Policy H6. Further, the increase in size over the 'original' dwelling, which is the benchmark set in Policy H6, would be even greater given that the original dwelling has already been extended.
9. In particular, the proposed two-storey wing on the south-western side of the dwelling would significantly increase the overall bulk and visual prominence of the property. It would result in the length of the main façade overlooking the valley being approximately 30% greater than the existing dwelling, with a prominent gable end. It would also present a substantially enlarged side elevation to the Careys Road frontage, within just 2-3 metres of the boundary. The elevated position of the site would accentuate the impact of the increased height and scale of the building. As such the proposed new dwelling would be a significant intrusion into the rural area outside of Pury End, which would harm the open character and verdant appearance of the adjacent fields and surrounding countryside.

10. With regard to the design of the proposed dwelling, Policy G3 of the Local Plan expects development to be compatible with the existing character of the locality in terms of type, design and materials. This is supported by paragraph 58 of the Framework, which seeks to ensure development reflects the identity of local surrounding and materials. The Council's Planning Guidance Note on Residential Design in the Countryside (1998) emphasises the need to reflect local distinctiveness in the design of new development, by reference to the scale, materials and proportions of traditional buildings in the area. I noted that Pury End is characterised by mainly stone houses, which represents the predominant local vernacular. Newer houses that I saw along Careys Road on the edge of the village mostly appear to reflect this character.
11. The proposed dwelling by contrast introduces a number of elements which do not appear to be characteristic of Pury End. The use of timber boarding and render to the external walls would not reflect the traditional stone construction seen on nearby dwellings and within the village. The full height two-storey windows on the south-east facing elevation of the dwelling would not reflect the proportion of solid wall to openings which is characteristic of buildings in the village. The scale and height of the south-west wing would also fail to be subservient to the main part of the house. In these respects the proposed dwelling would not be compatible with the traditional design and materials of buildings in Pury End and would thereby cause further harm to the character and appearance of the area.
12. I note the appellant's aim to create a building in the vernacular, with modern and unusual features. I also acknowledge that paragraph 58 of the Framework does not seek to prevent innovation. However, in this case there is a predominant local vernacular, reflected in nearby buildings, which should provide the reference point for new buildings on the appeal site. This is reinforced through an adopted design guide which is consistent with paragraph 59 of the Framework and to which I attach significant weight in this appeal.
13. I have also been referred to a number of new buildings in the surrounding area which make use of timber cladding and large window designs. However, it is a core principle of the planning system that each case must be determined on its own merits. From what I could see, most of these other buildings are in more isolated locations in the countryside or set within groupings of former farm buildings where a barn style appearance would be more appropriate.
14. Appeal B proposes a pitched roof over the existing flat roofed garage building. Saved Policy H17 of the Local Plan seeks to restrict the scale of residential extensions in the open countryside. Although this is a garage rather than a dwelling, I am satisfied that Policy H17 is also intended to apply to extensions to domestic outbuildings, which if not limited could also harm the character of the countryside. Policy H17 expects extensions to respect the scale and character of the existing dwelling and in the open countryside to not increase the volume of the original dwelling by more than 50%.
15. The original dwelling on the appeal site has already been doubled in volume by the addition of previous extensions and the garage building. So the further addition of the proposed roof to the garages would exceed the 50% limit, contrary to the criteria and aims of Policy H17.
16. Based on the submitted plans, the proposed roof would increase the height of the garage to approximately 5.5 metres from its existing height of 2.5-3 metres. The effect of the roof would be to double the height the garage

overall, significantly increasing its bulk. Saved Policy EV1 of the Local Plan expects development proposals to have regard to the relationship with adjoining land. Given the prominence and visibility of the site from the public footpaths to the north and from Careys Road, the increased height and bulk of the garage would have a materially harmful impact on the openness and undeveloped character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.

17. The ridge of the garage would be approximately 1 metre below the ridge of the roof to the existing house on the appeal site. It would also sit well above the eaves of the proposed new dwelling considered under Appeal A. In either case the height and scale of the resulting garage building would visually compete with the main dwelling. I acknowledge that the Council's Residential Extensions SPG (1998) discourages flat roofs on garages. However, in this case the size of the existing garage is such that the addition of a pitched roof as proposed would lead to a building which would no longer be subservient to the main house.
18. Overall, therefore, I conclude that the proposals for both Appeal A and Appeal B would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area. Consequently, as described, they would conflict with saved Policies H6, H17, G3 and EV1 of the Local Plan and fail to comply with paragraphs 17 and 58 of the Framework.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

M Hayden

INSPECTOR