



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2019

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/19/3225882

12 Barton Road, Comberton, Cambridgeshire CB23 7BP

- 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 Patel (KRCP Properties Ltd) against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref: S/2608/18/FL, dated 6 July 2018, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is internal alterations and first floor extension of existing dwelling to form two additional dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. There is no dispute between the parties in respect of the effect of the proposed alterations and extensions to the appeal building in character, appearance and living conditions terms. I have no reason to disagree with the views expressed by the Council about such matters. Indeed, I am satisfied that in respect of the extensions and alterations to the building they would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area of Comberton (CA). The main issue is whether the proposed front car parking area would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA and the designated Protected Village Amenity Area (PVAA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located at the core of the village, and within the above CA. The significance of the CA is derived, in part, from prevalent form of historic architecture and the presence of green landscaped places in the form of public open space, private gardens and additional planting within the public realm. The appeal site's surroundings are designated as a PVAA owing to the significance of undeveloped land in contributing to the setting of buildings and creating tranquil areas.
4. The existing dwelling has been extended, and the windows altered, however, it makes a positive contribution to the character of the surrounding area. The dwelling is adjacent to a single storey shop of a functional design. The car parking area in front of the shop contrasts with most of the other properties in the area where parking is screened by boundary treatments and landscaping. The latter characteristic adds positively and distinctively to the significance of this part of the CA.

5. The development would replace the existing front garden with parking for five cars. This would result in a significant area of hardstanding that would be inconsistent with the prevailing verdant character of the appeal site and most of the other properties in the locality. Therefore, the design of the development is inappropriate as it does not respond to its immediate circumstances, which include a conservation area.
6. This harm would be exacerbated as, owing to parking restrictions in the vicinity and general convenience, the parking area is likely to be widely used. The view of up to five vehicles in front of the building would appear harsh, dominant and out of place in the street-scene and would be at odds with the softer and greener frontages that mainly exist elsewhere in the area. In this regard, I find that harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the CA and the PVAA.
7. I note the existing car parking area in front of the shop. However, some views of this from the west are screened by planting and boundary treatment. Furthermore, owing to the removal of the front garden, I conclude that the cumulative impact of having two adjacent car parking areas would lead to demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Whilst I acknowledge the proposed surface material for the car park, this would not have the same positive impact on the area as the existing grassed surface and, in any event, it would not overcome my concern about harmful impact of the parking of vehicles on the site.
8. I acknowledge that the appellant may opt to remove the grassed area in association with use of the appeal property as a single dwelling. I cannot be certain if this would happen or indeed if planning permission would be required for a new car parking area in association with use of the property as a single dwelling. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its individual planning merits and on the basis that planning permission is sought for the proposed car parking area.
9. I have found that harm would be caused to the both the PVAA and the CA. The harm to the CA would be less than substantial taking into account paragraph 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework. However, there are no identified public benefits that outweigh such harm. This is a matter to which I afford great weight in decision making terms. I therefore conclude that the development would not accord with Policies HQ/1, NH/11 and NH/14 of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 which, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new developments preserve and enhance the character of areas and heritage assets (and their setting), in line with their significance and to maintain the character of villages.

Other Matters

10. The development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposal would result in the provision of two new dwellings, the fact that the Council is able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply (plus buffer) leads me to conclude that the harm would not be outweighed by the public benefits.
11. I have had regard to the impact upon the setting of the Grade II Listed Buildings at 8 (Cross Farmhouse) and 16 (Hawks Farmhouse) Barton Road.

Owing to the nature of the proposal, and the separation distances, I conclude that the setting of the listed buildings would be preserved.

12. I acknowledge that the proposal would seek to boost the supply of houses in the area. This a positive matter to weight in the planning balance, although the contribution to housing supply from two dwellings would be limited.
13. I note the views of the appellant regarding the need to modernise the existing dwelling and that, in its current form, it is asserted that works may not be viable or desired by the prevailing local housing market. As I have not been provided with any objective evidence to substantiate these arguments, I have been unable to afford them significant weight in my considerations.
14. I have also noted the efforts taken by the appellant to secure suitable living conditions for the future occupiers of the dwellings. In addition, I am satisfied that the proposal would not cause harm to the setting of the nearby grade II listed building. However, these are matters of neutral consequence in the overall planning balance.
15. None of the other matters raised outweigh or alter my conclusion on the main issue.

Conclusion

16. For the preceding reasons, and taking into account all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR