
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 May 2020

by Matthew Woodward BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2620/D/20/3244370

Forge House, High Street, Wighton NR23 1AL

- 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 Sue Hipkin against the decision of North Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref PF/19/0972, dated 11 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is rear extension, car port & dormer insertion & extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wighton Conservation Area and whether the setting of a nearby listed building would be preserved.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises an existing bungalow which is set back and lies slightly elevated relative to High Street. It lies in the Wighton Conservation Area (CA). To the rear of the appeal site is the Church of All Saints, a Grade I listed building.
4. A conservation area appraisal for the CA has not been submitted to me but I have based my assessment of the significance of the CA on my site visit and the evidence before me. Wighton is a predominantly linear settlement with a quintessentially rural English village feel, defined by an assortment of charming brick and flint cottages and short terraces. Some of the properties along High Street are relatively modern additions which lack the vernacular style and finesse of many of the other dwellings in the area. However, the retained flint boundary walls which adjoin the street and run along most of its length ensure that the historic architectural style prevails, even in places where the building style is divergent. These attributes contribute to the character and appearance of the area and significance of the CA.
5. The Grade I listed Church of All Saints is located in a prominent position within the village. It comprises a two-storey nave fronted by a large porch and attached to an impressive bell tower, with several other elements attached to the nave which give the building an overall striking appearance. The use of local building materials combined with the building's architectural detailing and

fenestration arrangement further enhances its traditional ecclesiastical appearance. The building appears to have been designed to be viewed from a distance, and these features contribute to the significance of the building as a heritage asset.

6. The existing house represents a departure from the prevailing historic character of the CA due to its more recent construction and understated design. Despite this, and its elevated location relative to the street, its rearward position within the plot along with its modest form means that it has a somewhat muted appearance in the street. Therefore, whilst it is not prominent or incongruous in the street, neither does it make a positive contribution to the CA, thus its overall effect is neutral.
7. The larger of the two proposed forward projecting extensions would bring the built form much closer to the street and would markedly increase the dwelling's mass and presence in the street. In particular, the elongated design of the two dormers proposed within this extension would add considerable bulk to the extended dwelling. Despite the set-back of the dwelling from the road and the dormers' oblique orientation relative to the street, they would be readily visible in several places along the street close to the appeal site. Due to their elongated design and the fact that they would dominate the roof slopes on an extension which itself would be prominent due to its projection and overall scale, the dormers would have an ungainly appearance resulting in an extension which would appear obtrusive in the street. I appreciate that dormers are not novel features of the CA, and the cat-slide roof design as proposed would be similar to many other dormers in the area. However, none of the examples I saw occupied a large amount of roof space in the same manner as the proposal, nor appeared as prominent in the street.
8. The extensions would be constructed of brick and flint materials which would complement the traditional style of properties in the CA. Moreover, the smaller front facing flat roof extension would appear subservient to the existing dwelling and would be a sufficient distance from the street so as not to appear prominent. In addition, the extended dwelling would be set back from the street to a greater extent than dwellings to the south of the appeal site and those on the opposite side of High Street. However, Policy HOU8 of the North Norfolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (Core Strategy) is unsupportive of proposals which would result in a disproportionate increase in the height or scale of the original dwelling having regard to the prevailing character of the area. Therefore, whilst I do not find that the proposed extensions would significantly increase the size of the existing dwelling in comparison with other dwellings on the street, I find that the front dormer additions proposed on the larger front extension would be disproportionate in scale and be visually discordant in relation to the extension proposed and the dwelling as existing, to the detriment of the CA.
9. Turning to the impact on the setting of the listed church, a landmark feature of the village. Obtainable views of the church from the appeal site's proximity are reduced by the presence of the existing bungalow. Due to the position of the extensions in front of the existing dwelling, there would be a limited reduction in obtainable views of the church from the street having regard to the presence of the existing built form. Overall, a visual appreciation of the church from within the street and the wider village would not be significantly undermined by the proposal. Therefore, the scale, design and appearance of the extensions

relative to the church and other listed buildings within the CA means that the proposal would not harm the significance of the setting of the listed buildings. However, this does not detract from the harm I have identified in respect of the character and appearance of the CA.

10. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and therefore any harm requires clear and convincing justification. In accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, which I have done in reaching my decision.
11. I appreciate that the proposal would improve the appearance of the existing cottage to some extent, by utilising traditional materials which would replace the building's façade which has limited architectural or historic merit. The construction work would also support local builders, resulting in economic benefits. However, having considered these as public benefits, I am not satisfied that collectively they would be sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm I have identified, as required by paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
12. For the foregoing reasons I conclude that the development would harm the character and appearance of the CA. The development would be contrary to Policies HO8, EN4 and EN8 of the Core Strategy which require, amongst other matters, that development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area, including conservation areas, and extensions are not disproportionately large. The development would also conflict with paragraph 196 of the Framework as the public benefits would not outweigh the less than substantial harm.

Other Matters

13. The proposal would comply with a range of other planning policies relating to matters including living conditions, highway safety, landscape, contamination, flood risk and ecology and would not harm listed buildings. Furthermore, whilst the appeal site lies in the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Council does not object to the impact on this landscape designation, and I have no reason to take an alternative view. Be that as it may, I find conflict with the Policies detailed above and, as such, the proposal would not accord with the development plan overall.
14. It is also proposed to erect dormers on the rear roof slope of the bungalow and a car port towards the rear boundary of the site. However, these elements would have a limited impact on the CA due to their inconspicuous position and limited overall scale. Like the Council, I do not find these elements of the scheme objectionable, but it does not negate the harm I have identified in respect of the front extension.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Matthew Woodward

INSPECTOR