



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 August 2020

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 07 September 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/20/3254979

38 School Lane, Thriplow, Royston SG8 7RH

- 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 Owen Mackay against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/4041/19/FL, dated 20 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing bungalow and chicken shed and the construction of a new house.
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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 area, including the effect on the Thriplow Conservation Area, the Protected Village Amenity Area and the Green Belt; and
 - the effect of the proposal on protected trees.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site comprises a large plot on the southern side of School Lane within the development framework of the village as defined by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (SCLP) where a replacement dwelling is acceptable in principle. However, the proposal is for the demolition of a relatively small, simple bungalow on the site together with an old wooden shed and its replacement by a much wider, deeper and taller detached house.
4. Thriplow is an attractive, dispersed village comprising frontage development along a series of lanes interspersed with extensive paddocks and grass fields and with only minimal estate development. The whole village, including the open land, is designated as a Conservation Area, and includes many listed buildings albeit none immediately adjacent to the appeal site. As such, the rural nature of the settlement, with attractive views from the lanes and internal public footpaths across the paddocks and fields, and into the wider countryside surrounding the village, are a fundamental part of its character.

5. The existing bungalow on the site is located against the eastern boundary of the plot next to No 40, the adjacent bungalow, with the remainder of the very wide frontage undeveloped. Despite the presence of the old shed, a handful of trees and recent hedging, this leaves a wide undeveloped gap allowing views from School Lane towards the grass paddocks and fields beyond. The sheer scale of the proposed house, with its combination of a much greater width and height, together with its location towards the centre of the plot, would close off much of this view, overdeveloping and unduly dominating the frontage when compared to the existing bungalow¹. Whilst the bungalow is unusually small for the site, this would seriously harm the rural, open character of the village at this point and fail to preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. The ridge of the house would be slightly below that of Sunny Peak, a detached house on the other side of No 40, but this is sited on much higher ground.
6. The importance of protecting the western side of the plot from development is specifically recognised by its allocation in the SCLP as a 'Protected Village Amenity Area' (PVAA) where Policy NH/11 precludes development which would have an adverse impact on the character, amenity, tranquillity or function of the village. Close inspection of the SCLP Policies Map shows this designation extending as far as the old shed, whereas the proposed house would intrude well into this area, particularly towards the rear of the plot. The excessive bulk of the house extending into this area, with its tall north-south wing at the western end, would also unduly dominate the remainder of the PVAA in further conflict with this policy.
7. The new house would be located further away from the boundary with the adjacent bungalow, No 40, but this would not compensate for the loss of the wide undeveloped frontage to the west. It would only allow a relatively narrow view between the two properties and the high grass bank at this point would limit any potential views of the fields and paddocks behind.
8. In addition to the impact on views from School Lane, the proposal would erode the wider character and appreciation of the Conservation Area. The appeal site is open to views from the well-used east-west footpath between Church Street and Middle Street. This crosses the grass fields in the heart of the village and provides attractive pastoral views in all directions. From here the new house, with its wide and tall rear elevation and position deeper in the plot, would be an intrusive and unduly dominant feature alongside the other more discreet properties that can be seen. These fields form part of the designated Green Belt and the proposal would therefore have an adverse impact on its rural character and openness contrary to Policy HN/8.
9. The height and depth of the proposed building also mean it would be clearly seen rising above No 40 from the small green at the Brook Lane/School Lane/Church Street junction, an attractive focus within the Conservation Area which is overlooked by two important listed buildings. This would result in an incremental erosion of its rural village character.
10. The proposed house would be of sympathetic materials, and the low eaves and steeply pitched roof with a high ridgeline are intended to reflect the form of a traditional timber framed barn of which there are two in the village. However, the use of two rows of dormers on the front elevation would be without precedent in the village and these together with the steep, hipped gable roof

¹ As shown by Drawing no. 1804:07 - Section thr' front of proposed house.

forms would result in an over-complex and unsympathetic design. Whilst there are a few modern large-scale houses in the village, including Arklow House, Lower Street and Paddock House, Church Street, these are suitable designs for their setting and do not amount to a precedent applicable to the appeal site.

11. Planning permission was granted for a substantial two storey half-timbered style dwelling on the site in 2003, renewed in 2007 and 2010², and according to the appellant, commenced on site thus preserving permission in 2013. However, this is not readily apparent on site and has not been confirmed by the Council. In any event, given the length of time since permission was granted and confirmation that this scheme would not now meet the appellant's needs, the likelihood of this permission being implemented as a fallback position is uncertain and thus can only be given limited weight.
12. The existing 1950s bungalow on the site is plain but inoffensive and the old shed is fairly small and screened from the road by vegetation. As such these are established buildings within the Conservation Area and their removal does not constitute a factor in favour of the scheme.
13. For these reasons the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area, the Thriplow Conservation Area, the PVAA and the Green Belt, in conflict with SCLP Policies HQ/1, H/16, NH/14, NH/11 and NH/8 respectively. These require high quality design which makes a positive contribution to its local and wider context, require no significant harm to the local area, only support proposals that sustain and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the historic environment, preclude proposals within or adjacent to a PVAA which would have an adverse impact on the character or amenity of the village and preclude proposals which would have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.

Protected trees

14. There are a number of trees around the perimeter of the site which have important visual amenity value and are protected by Conservation Area designation. The Council are concerned that no arboricultural report has been submitted to demonstrate that these trees could be protected. However, as pointed out by the appellant, these trees are some distance from the proposed dwelling and, if suitable measures are taken, unlikely to be adversely affected. In the circumstances the necessary protection could be secured by attaching appropriate conditions to any permission.

Conclusion

15. The proposal would provide a large, detached house to modern amenity and environmental standards which would provide attractive accommodation suitable to meet the appellant's ongoing needs. However, these material considerations do not outweigh the conflict with the development plan which have been identified under the first main issue. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR

² Reference S/0782/10/F