
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2020 by John Gunn DipTP Dip DBE MRTPI

Decision by R C Kirby BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Z2830/W/20/3254493

Road House Hotel, 16 High Street, Roade, Northampton NN7 2NW

- 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 Michael Davies against the decision of South Northants District Council.
 - The application Ref S/2019/2091/FUL, dated 23 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is detached double garage and storage area above.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. On 22nd July 2020 South Northamptonshire District Council adopted the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029 (LP). It replaces all of the saved policies of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (adopted in 1997) and supersedes Policy H2 and Policy H6 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2029 (adopted in 2014). The Council has confirmed by e-mail that the policies that are relevant to this appeal are SS2, SDP1, GS4, and HE6. The appellant has been made aware of the adoption of the LP and has had an opportunity to comment.
4. According to the planning application the proposed development was originally intended to serve the Road House Hotel however the appellant has since confirmed that he has sold the hotel. He has retained ownership of the part of the appeal site upon which the proposed development sits. Accordingly, I will assess the proposal as a stand-alone development.

Main Issues

5. The effect of the proposed development upon: 1) the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including whether it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Roade Conservation Area (CA) and 2) the living conditions of the occupiers of No 18a High Street, with particular regard to outlook and access.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Character and appearance

6. The appeal site is located on High Street which forms the spine to the CA. The Roade Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (adopted September 2015) indicates that the village grew from strong agricultural roots. It has resulted in buildings, of a variety of architectural styles dating from the seventeenth century, in close proximity to the back of the footpaths on High Street.
7. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at paragraph 192 sets out matters which should be taken into account including sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
8. The proposed development would be located on the former car park of the Roade House Hotel, which provides a gap within an otherwise built up road frontage. The new garage would be a sizeable structure and being set back from the road, it would not reflect the pattern of development in the locality. Moreover, it would appear as a standalone feature with no functional connection to surrounding properties. When viewed in combination with the outbuildings at No 20, it would appear as an isolated bulky addition, lacking any street presence. As a result, it would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area and would not positively contribute to the streetscene.
9. I acknowledge that the appellant has incorporated design features that would be appropriate for the conservation area, including doors that open outwards with external hinges, weathered brick, stone dressing and slate, however these would not outweigh the harm that I have identified above.
10. Given my findings above, I conclude that the proposal would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the surrounding area. The contribution that the appeal site makes the significance of the CA would be eroded by the proposed garage. Accordingly, the character and appearance of the CA would not be preserved or enhanced by the proposal.
11. Whilst the harm that would be caused to the Roade CA as a designated heritage asset would be less than substantial, the Framework makes it clear that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

12. The appellant has indicated that the development and improvement of under-utilised land and buildings is encouraged, and this is what is proposed. This matter weighs in favour of the proposal, but attracts limited weight, given the nature and quantum of development proposed in this case. It does not amount to a public benefit which outweighs the great weight that I am required to give to the harm that would be caused to the significance of this designated heritage asset.
13. For all of the above reasons I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Roade CA. Accordingly, the scheme is contrary to Policies SS2 and HE6 of the LP, and the Framework which jointly seek sustainable developments that demonstrates compatibility and integration with its surroundings, including the built heritage and preserves or enhances the significance of heritage assets.

Living conditions

14. The proposed development would be located a short distance from the common boundary with the bungalow at No 18A High Street. According to the appellant's design and access statement, which is not disputed by the Council, the gable end of the proposal would be approximately 18 metres from the front elevation of No 18A. No 18A lies to the north of the appeal proposal and has windows facing towards the appeal site.
15. The proposed development would present a tall building in close proximity to these windows and would be a prominent and dominant feature which would significantly diminish the current open outlook from them. I acknowledge that a number of coniferous and deciduous trees sit along the northern boundary of the appeal site, which would help screen the proposed development to a limited degree, however given their proximity to the proposed development and condition, their long term retention cannot be guaranteed. Moreover, when viewed in combination with existing outbuildings at No 20 High Street, the proposed development would have a significant enclosing effect on the rooms that these windows serve. It is likely that they would be less pleasant to use as a result of the garage building.
16. The garage doors would be orientated towards the private access drive that serves Nos 18 and 18A with a short forecourt in front of the garage. From the drawings and evidence available it is not possible to assess what space would be available between the doors to the garage and the shared access drive. As a result, I am unable to determine whether a vehicle parked in front of the garage would impede access to Nos 18 and 18A. Notwithstanding the above any inconvenience would only likely to be for a short period of time, and unlikely to coincide with the arrival of emergency vehicles, and consequently the proposal does not fall on this matter.
17. Whilst acknowledging the concerns raised about the proposal no longer forming part of the former Roade House Hotel, there is nothing within the development plan policies that I have been referred to requiring that a development of this nature to be ancillary to another use. Moreover, whilst it is asserted that the garage may be used for a business, I have no evidence to substantiate this

matter. Accordingly, neither of these matters are determining factors in this case.

18. I have found that any inconvenience to access would be limited, however this would not outweigh the harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of 18A High Street, with regard to outlook. Consequently, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the living conditions of its occupiers. This would be contrary to Policy SS2 of the LP and the Framework which requires that proposed development should not unacceptably harm the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Other Matters

19. In their statement the Council referred to Policy SDP2 - Residential extensions and upwards extensions, now LP Policy SDP1 and LP Policy GS4 - Backland development. Given that the proposal is neither a residential extension, or involves '....the complete or partial redevelopment of residential garden land...', I find that these policies are not relevant to my consideration of this appeal.
20. I acknowledge that a pre application enquiry was made by the appellant and the Council has informed him that they would be supportive of development of the appeal site if the hotel was converted to a residential use. The former hotel remains in commercial use and consequently the views expressed at the pre-application stage are not relevant to this appeal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

21. In light of the above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Gunn

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

22. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

RC Kirby
INSPECTOR