
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2020

by A Blicq BSc (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/D/20/3262631

55 High Street, Buckden, St Neots PE19 5TA

- 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 Ms Caroline Underwood against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00748/HHFUL, dated 9 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of double garage in timber on concrete base at rear of property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of double garage in timber on concrete base at rear of property at 55 High Street, Buckden, St Neots PE19 5TA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/00748/HHFUL, dated 9 April 2019, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Land Registry Location Plan; Proposed Garage and Workshop by H A Architectural Services – Detailed Elevations; Proposed Garage and Workshop by H A Architectural Services – Detailed Design Plans; 3-D visualisation, untitled.
 - 3) No development above slab level shall take place until full details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the garage hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Procedural Matter

2. The evidence before me suggests that amended designs were submitted during application and considered by the Council. It is these drawings that I have used in my reasoning even though they do not reflect the description in the banner above.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:

- Whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Buckden Conservation Area and whether the development would preserve the historic features, including settings, of the Grade II listed buildings known as Barn to North West of Number 51, 51 High Street (known as Coneygarths), 53 High Street and York House.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is land to the rear of a mid-19th century detached red brick dwelling (No 55) which sits hard on the footway on High Street, within a long and highly attractive road frontage of other 17th, 18th and early 19th century period dwellings.
5. Buckden is a nucleated village, mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 and which appears to have had strategic importance as a staging post along the Great North Road, as well as being the chosen residence of the Bishops of Lincoln.
6. The Buckden Conservation Area (BCA) encompasses most of the historic heart of the village, and is centred around a large area of former parkland associated with a red brick Tudor palace and the 13th century parish church. High Street runs along the western boundary of this parkland, and to the south of No 55, a stretch of original curtain wall and the remains of a gatehouse are evident on the other side of the road.
7. The distinctiveness of this stretch of High Street arises from its mix of attractive and well maintained period dwellings, the diversity of design and the proximity of the Palace, its distinguished period structures and its grounds.
8. Several dwellings have side passages, but views beyond the road frontage are fleeting. The appeal site would be accessed from a narrow lane running between No 55 and 53 High Street (No 53).
9. I conclude that the significance of the High Street in the BCA arises from its unspoilt and largely intact historic fabric, and the spatial relationship of its frontage with the road. This is reflective of the village's evolution and the economic opportunities generated by passing traffic.
10. The proposals comprise a small garage and workshop, with pitched roof, to the rear of No 55. I appreciate that this land was not originally part of No 55's garden but it is unclear why this fact should be given particular weight.
11. The garage would not be directly opposite the access on High Street and views from the road would be glimpsed and partly obscured by frontage buildings. The garage's pitched roof and gable ends would be consistent with other buildings nearby, its scale would be appropriately modest and it would appear subservient to those nearby buildings. The selection and use of materials could be controlled by condition and in any case those suggested would be sympathetic to other buildings in the area.
12. As such, I conclude that the garage would not have an adverse effect on the significance of the BCA.
13. There is a high proportion of listed buildings on or to the rear of High Street and the Council has referred to four in connection with this application, as listed above.

14. Coneygarths is a 17th century timber framed and plastered detached dwelling set back from the road and screened from it by mature garden vegetation. It is separated from the appeal site by an access road to backland development and the plot of No 53. The BCA appraisal sets out that Coneygarths disrupts the architectural unity of High Street, and highlights that backland development has been allowed in its former grounds. Coneygarths stands apart from the line of attached or closely spaced dwellings running north from No 53. Although of interest in its own right, the subdivision and separation of its former grounds reduces any former associative link to nearby plots. As such its significance is derived largely from its form and historic fabric.
15. I appreciate that it may be possible to see the appeal site from the rear of Coneygarths, but this does not necessarily amount to harm to Coneygarth's setting. I am satisfied that the appeal site is not integral to the significance of Coneygarths or its setting.
16. Number 53 is a modest two storey red brick Georgian dwelling with a symmetrical front, set slightly back from the road. Its significance is derived from its intact historic fabric, and its collective contribution to the High Street frontage. The set back position of No 53, relative to No 55, enables greater visibility to the rear of the building line than seen elsewhere along High Street.
17. The garage would be visible in some views of No 53's frontage. However, it would be on land well to the rear, and as noted above, the garage would appear subservient to all the buildings lining High Street. Moreover, it would not be in full view as the site is slightly dog-legged. I am satisfied that the garage would not be detrimental to No 53's significance or setting.
18. York House is an 18th century two storey dwelling included in the listings for group value. It has grander proportions than either No 53 or No 55, and its panelled door and timber doorcase are located hard on the footway. Views to the rear of the plot, along a side alley are obstructed by a substantial gate. Its significance derives from its intact historic fabric, and collective contribution to the High Street frontage.
19. The garage would not be seen in the same visual context as York House and I see no reason to conclude that the garage would have an adverse effect on its significance or setting.
20. The barn dates from the 18th century and was originally thatched. It has been converted to a dwelling and appears to have had new window openings on the first floor as well as in the pitched roof. From the appeal site it appears hemmed in by brick boundary walls and garden areas. It is unclear which areas of land or other buildings might have historic association with the barn.
21. I conclude that the barn's significance derives from such historic fabric as remains. The garage's form would reflect the barn's pitched roof but would be of a much lesser scale and bulk. I am satisfied that the garage would not have an adverse effect on the significance or setting of the barn.
22. I disagree that the garage would be a distraction from the listed buildings. It would be seen only in fleeting views, and its location and appearance would not appear incongruous with the irregular building pattern. Moreover, the parish council supports the application as it considers it would be an improvement. Whilst I give this argument limited weight it nonetheless supports my

reasoning that the effect of the development on the settings of the listed buildings would be neutral.

23. The Council argues that the site was a key area of open space in former times but I have not been provided with any map regression to support this suggestion or to show that the site had a particular association with the nearby listed buildings.
24. I conclude that the garage would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the BCA, and would preserve the historic features of nearby listed buildings, including their settings. The development would not be contrary to Policy LP34 of the Local Plan which is concerned with the safeguarding of heritage assets and their significance. Nor would it be contrary to Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework which is concerned with the historic environment, or Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Conditions

25. I have imposed a condition listing those drawings upon which I have made my decision, for the avoidance of doubt. I have also imposed a condition requiring the submission and approval of external materials to ensure the Council retains control over the garage's appearance. This is to safeguard the character and appearance of the BCA.

Conclusion

26. In the light of the above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

A Blicq

INSPECTOR