



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2020

by Conor Rafferty LLB (Hons), AIEMA, Solicitor

Decision by Chris Preston BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/D/20/3255192

Poppy Tree Farm, Poppy Lotts Drove, Marshland St James, Wisbech, Cambs PE14 8HF

- 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 and Mrs R Swann against the decision of the Council of the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk.
 - The application Ref 20/00192/F, dated 05 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as “proposed extensions and alterations to the existing dwelling”.
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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.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site is located on Poppylotts Drove in Wisbech. It comprises a modest detached, traditional style cottage with separate outbuildings set within a sizeable plot. The surrounding area is decidedly rural in nature, with the site bounded on all sides by large, open fields.
5. The site contributes positively to the surrounds. It is characterised by its residential use but the simple shape and traditional character of the cottage, combined with the outbuildings, ensures that the agricultural nature of the area is reflected. There is a pleasing symmetry to the front façade with pairs of sash windows at first and ground floor level, set either side of the entrance door. Although the site is situated on a quiet road views of the property remain on account of the flat and generally open nature of the landscape. While a glazed projection is present to the rear of the dwelling it does not unduly detract from the overall rural feel of the site due to its modest and subservient nature, together with the fact that it is not overly visible from Poppylotts Drove.

6. As a result of the sheer scale and volume of the various extensions, the character of the property would be significantly altered. Substantial bulk would be added to the dwelling, creating a built form that would fail to respect the original dimensions. Whilst the appellants maintain that the design concept was to enable the juxtaposition between old and new to be apparent, the existing property would be completely swamped by the proposal to an extent where very little, if any, of the original character would remain visible. In addition, the resulting variety of building levels at the property would create a complex profile at odds with the current simple form.
7. While the materials may individually respect the agricultural nature of the site, the proposed combination would lack coherence. It would result in a jarring feature whereby the extended elements would be visually separate from the host dwelling. This would be heightened by the difference in style between the proposed windows and chimney and those at the cottage. The significant increase in glazing would create an overtly modern design and the use of different sizes and shapes of casement windows would appear at odds with the consistent style and arrangement of sash windows at the cottage, even accounting for the setback along the front elevation. Similarly, the parties agree that the proposed chimney does not reflect that on the existing dwelling. It would be a dominant feature that would dwarf the existing chimney at the site and would reflect the agricultural and traditional feel of the cottage.
8. All of these elements combined serve to distinguish the extensions as separate from, and a different style to, the original cottage rather than resulting in an overall coherent design. The appellants have referred to the National Design Guide, stating that the proposal creates new character as a direct response to the changing needs of the occupant. However, I find that the form, mass and scale of the extensions would represent poor design for the reasons given above. While the appellants have argued that any such extension at the property would fail to reflect its simplistic nature as it is not fit for modern purpose, sufficient information has not been provided to demonstrate that this is the case. Whilst the property is modest in proportion it is not unduly small. Personal circumstances will seldom outweigh more general planning considerations and it appears to me that the property is perfectly inhabitable in its present form, or that it could be made so without the need for additions that would be harmful to its character.
9. With regards to the impact on the surrounding area, the proposal would be a prominent addition to the locality. In reducing the rural nature of the dwelling, it would alter the character of the site and its contribution to the surrounds. The resulting imposing dwelling with a mismatch of modern and traditional elements would appear as an incongruous addition amid the open fields. Unlike the existing dwelling, which sits comfortably in the rural landscape, the proposed development would appear as an overtly modern addition and the pleasing synergy between the house and the adjacent barns and outbuildings would be lost. The requirement for good design applies to all development and the presence of screening and limited use of the road do not amount to reasons to allow poor design.
10. For all of those reasons I find that the development would have a significantly adverse visual effect on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area. Accordingly, it would fail to comply with Policies CS06 and CS08 of the Core Strategy 2011 and Policies DM5 and DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016. It would also conflict with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework which states

that planning should ensure that developments are attractive as a result of good architecture and seeks visually attractive design sympathetic to local character.

Other matters

11. The appellant has referred to examples of similar chimneys in the surrounding area. However, limited information has been provided in this regard. In any event, the appeal is decided on its own site-specific circumstances and consequently, reference to other development nearby does not outweigh the harm identified above.

C Rafferty

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

12. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report, and, on that basis, I agree that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Preston

INSPECTOR