



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 December 2020

by K Ford MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/D/20/3260289

48 Avenue Road, St Neots PE19 1LH

- 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 H Barnard against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00662/HHFUL, dated 6 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is rear dormer extension and loft conversion. New side window for loft staircase.
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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 St Neots Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a semi detached house built as part of the late 19th Century and early 20th Century urban extension of St Neots and forms part of the St Neots Conservation Area, designated in part because of its historic form and layout. The layout of Avenue Road has regularity in the eaves and roofline which gives a regimented character, particularly to the front of properties. There is some variation to the rear with outriggers but regularity and balanced roofs remain a defining feature. The dwelling is typical of others in the road including the use of buff bricks with red brick detailing and ornate timberwork.
4. The proposed dormer would cover a significant proportion of the roof. Even if the dimensions quoted by the Council are incorrect, I am of the view that the scheme would not be subservient in scale or mass to the original roof. The slight reduction in the size of the dormer closest to the outrigger would do little to ameliorate the harm.
5. The development would be located on the rear of the property but nevertheless would be visible from a number of viewpoints, as illustrated in the appellant's Design and Access Statement. Although the gable outrigger would provide an element of screening, it would not be enough to hide the massing and bulk of the proposal.

6. The appellant has identified that the scheme has been designed to be homogenous with the permitted ground floor extension, choice of materials and window alignment. Be that as it may, the dormer would largely be viewed in isolation of some of these elements because of its elevated position.
7. The development would appear alien in the streetscape when viewed in the context, design and appearance of the roofscape and upper storey of the property and neighbouring dwellings. The existing roofing material maybe damaging the gable but this could be rectified without constructing the poorly designed dormer. Similarly, any restoration and refurbishment needed on the property could be done independently of the dormer.
8. Whilst the appellant has identified that the Conservation Area Appraisal states that Avenue Road is a 'street that would benefit from enhancement', I am of the view that the design of the proposal would not be innovative or high quality as suggested by the appellant and would not provide enhancement to the street. The scheme would provide variety, but not in a positive way.
9. The dwelling is not a Listed Building but would harm the Conservation Area, of which it forms part of, even if the individual property is not mentioned in the St Neots Conservation Area Appraisal. The development would be to the rear of the dwelling but the whole property is within the Conservation Area.
10. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
11. The appellant has identified that the scheme would create a larger usable space and increase the value of the property. However, these are private rather than public benefits. The proposal would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the St Neots Conservation Area and would cause less than substantial harm to its significance as a heritage asset. There would be no public benefits to outweigh this harm and so it would conflict with the NPPF and the part of Policy LP11 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Local Plan) which requires new development to respond positively to its context and draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings. Similarly, it would conflict with the part of Policy LP12 of the Local Plan that expects new development to contribute to the area's character and identity. It would also conflict with Policy 34 of the Local Plan which requires proposals in Conservation Areas to preserve and wherever possible enhance features that contribute to the area's character, appearance and setting.

Other Matters

12. Any absence of harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and an improvement to the energy efficiency of the property are insufficient to outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Similarly, any economic benefits from the scheme would be very limited given the nature of the development.

13. Reference has been made to other schemes locally and nationally in support of the proposal. Irrespective of any similarities of the proposal with those developments each case is determined on its own merits. My assessment has been based on the information before me.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons I have identified, I conclude that irrespective of the absence of objection from neighbouring residents, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Ford

INSPECTOR