
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 October 2020

by Jillian Rann BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/20/3245092
39A Kings Road, St Neots PE19 1LD

- 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 & Mrs Michael & Michelle Woodbridge against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02554/HHFUL, dated 27 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 25 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing roof and conservatory & workshop and erection of new rear and first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's decision was based on revised drawings submitted during the course of the application. The Council has confirmed that neighbours and the Town Council were reconsulted on the amended plans. Therefore, I have based my decision on those revised drawings and am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by my having done so. For the avoidance of doubt, my decision is based on those drawings which are listed on the Council's decision notice.
3. The appellants have submitted further details with the appeal which were not part of their original application. Those include an arboricultural report, tree protection plans, a site plan (drawing 002 revision D) and a series of shadow diagram images. The additional details are supplementary. They do not include further revisions to the scheme shown on the drawings listed on the Council's decision notice, on which I have based my decision. Interested parties and the Council have been given the opportunity to comment on them as part of the appeal process. I have therefore taken those additional details into account and am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by my having done so.
4. On the basis of the additional arboricultural report and tree protection plans the Council has withdrawn its second reason for refusal, referring to the effect of the development on surrounding trees. On the basis of the tree retention and protection proposals shown in those submissions I am satisfied that the trees within the site could be retained and protected during the proposed works. Therefore, I have no reason to disagree with the Council's conclusion that the scheme would be acceptable with regard to its effect on trees. Accordingly, I have not considered the matter further.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effects of the proposed development on:
- the character and appearance of the appeal site and its surroundings, including St Neots Conservation Area (the SNCA); and
 - the living conditions of the occupants of 37 and 39 New Road with regard to light and outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance, including the SNCA

6. The appeal relates to an existing bungalow on Kings Road. The area of the SNCA in which the site is located is one of 19th century housing which grew up close to the centre of St Neots. The site's surroundings within the SNCA are characterised by Victorian terraced, semi-detached and detached houses, interspersed with larger detached residential villas from that period. The historic properties on Kings Road and surrounding streets display some variety with regard to their size, materials and individual architectural detailing. That variety adds interest to the long, parallel street frontages in this part of the SNCA and contributes to its character.
7. In general, the houses on Kings Road are set back slightly from the road frontage behind small front gardens. The western part of Kings Road is characterised mainly by regularly-spaced pairs of semi-detached properties. It also includes some more recent infill housing which generally reflects the scale and spacing of those historic houses.
8. The appeal site is located towards the eastern end of Kings Road, between two larger detached houses, 37 and 39 Kings Road (No 37 and No 39). Those neighbouring houses are set back slightly from their road frontages, reflecting the general pattern of development on Kings Road. No 39 is a substantial brick property in a large plot with mature planting around its boundaries. No 37 is situated on the boundary with the appeal site, and is also a large detached house with a long rear garden. Those large, well-preserved historic properties are prominent and positive features which contribute to the character and appearance of the street scene and the SNCA.
9. The appeal property is a bungalow of more recent construction located between No 37 and No 39. It is set some way further back from the road than those large properties to either side and other houses on Kings Road, with mature tree and shrub planting in its front garden. The existing bungalow differs in aspects of its detailing compared with the historic properties on Kings Road and in the SNCA nearby. However, because of its limited height and scale and the degree of its set back from the road, it has a relatively unassuming presence within the street scene at present. It also preserves a sense of separation and spaciousness around the large, detached historic properties on either side. Those larger buildings therefore maintain a sense of distinction from and prominence in relation to the buildings around them which contributes to their character and to that of the wider street scene within the SNCA.
10. The development would comprise significant extensions to the bungalow. However, the eaves of the two storey part of the extended building would still be relatively low, including in relation to those of the large neighbouring houses

at No 37 and No 39. Consequently, and as it would not extend any further forward than the existing bungalow, the extended dwelling would not appear unduly prominent within the wider Kings Road street scene. Nor would it erode the spacious, open appearance of the site's front garden, which contributes to the character of that wider street scene.

11. The extended building would not project any closer to No 39 than the existing bungalow. As well as its relatively low eaves, the roofs of those parts of the extended building closest to No 39 would slope away from the boundary with that neighbouring property. On that basis, despite the increase in its height and depth, the sense of separation and space between the appeal building and No 39 would be preserved and the extended building would not appear visually dominant in relation to that large neighbouring property.
12. However, the appeal building is located much closer to the neighbouring house at No 37 and its attached garage adjoins the boundary between the site and that neighbouring property. However, because of its very low height, the existing garage maintains a sense of separation and space between No 37 and the existing bungalow on the appeal site at present.
13. The tallest two storey part of the extended dwelling would be set away from the boundary with No 37. However, the roof of the garage between that part of the building and No 37 would be increased in height. The resultant, tall expanse of that pitched garage roof would be incongruous and disproportionately large in scale compared with the relatively modest roofs of other properties on Kings Road, including that of its immediate neighbour at No 37. The tall pitched roof of the garage would also appear awkward and discordant alongside the hipped roof of the two storey part of the extended building. It would therefore detract from the character and appearance of the appeal property and the wider street scene.
14. The extended garage roof would also create a significant increase in the bulk and massing of that part of the appeal building immediately alongside the boundary with No 37, which would be clearly evident in views from Kings Road to the front of the site. As a result, the development would have an unduly cramped appearance and significantly erode the distinctive sense of spaciousness around the large building at No 37 and the visual separation between the buildings which contributes to the character and appearance of the wider street scene.
15. The extended building would have a relatively wide frontage compared to others in the wider street scene. However, the existing bungalow is low and wide at present. The proposed building would incorporate features such as bay windows and tall sash-style windows that would reflect the detailing of other nearby properties and effectively break up the horizontality of its front elevation. Therefore, the development would not appear unduly horizontal in its proportions or harm the character or appearance of its surroundings in that regard.
16. However, as a result of the disproportionate scale and significant bulk of the extended garage roof adjacent to the boundary with No 37, and the awkward visual relationship between the enlarged garage roof and that of the extended appeal bungalow, overall the development would fail to preserve the character or appearance of its surroundings, including the SNCA.

17. Reference has been made to works permitted to other properties on Kings Road nearby. However, I do not have full details of those works or the circumstances in which they were permitted. Therefore, I cannot be certain that they were directly comparable in all respects to those in the current appeal which, in any event, I have considered on its own planning merits.
18. The harm to the character and appearance of the SNCA would be localised and less than substantial. Nevertheless, I give considerable importance and weight to that harm and to the presumption that preservation is desirable. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires any such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
19. The development would provide additional living accommodation for occupants of the dwelling. Reference has also been made to the intention to incorporate measures to improve energy efficiency and minimise resource consumption as part of the scheme. However, any public benefits in those regards arising from the extension of this single dwelling would be very modest and would not outweigh the harm I have identified.
20. Given the above, I conclude that the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the appeal site and its surroundings, including the SNCA. It would therefore conflict with Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan), Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 and the advice in the Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (the Design Guide SPD). Together, those policies require development to respond positively to its context and preserve features within conservation areas that contribute positively to the area's character and appearance. The development would also conflict with the Framework, which states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history.

Living conditions

21. The development would increase the height of the existing building and include two storey and single storey rear extensions quite close to the boundary with No 39. However, its eaves would remain relatively low and the roofs of its two storey sections would slope away from that boundary. On that basis, whilst its additional height and depth may be perceptible from No 39, it would not appear unduly dominant or overbearing or have an adverse effect on the outlook from No 39 overall.
22. However, shadow diagrams submitted by the appellant indicate that the extended building would result in a significant increase in the extent of No 39's rear garden that would be in shade in the late afternoon and early evening compared with the existing building. In particular, the diagrams indicate that the additional shading in the early evening would extend to the external areas immediately to the rear of the house at No 39. Those areas are likely to be well-used by neighbouring occupants, including in the summer when residents are likely to spend time in their gardens in the evening. The additional shading of those areas as a result of the development would have an adverse effect on neighbours' enjoyment of their property, including those outdoor areas.
23. Although the height of the garage adjacent to No 37 would be increased, the depth of that taller part of the building alongside the boundary with No 37 would be relatively limited. The flat roof of the single storey extension

proposed to the rear of the garage would be lower than the ridge of the existing workshop in a similar location, which is to be removed, and it would project only slightly further than that existing structure. Taking those factors into account, and the degree of separation between the taller two storey parts of the extended building and the boundary with No 37, the development would not have greater implications for the living conditions of the occupants of No 37 with regard to light or outlook compared to the existing situation.

24. However, I conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupants of 39 Kings Road with regard to light. It would therefore conflict with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan, which requires proposals to minimise overshadowing, and with the guidance in the Design Guide SPD in that regard. It would also conflict with the Framework which states that developments should create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other Matters

25. Matters relating to the Council's handling of the application do not affect my conclusions above, which are based on the planning merits of the case.
26. I am advised that permission has previously been granted for a dwelling in the rear garden of No 39 and that, whilst that appears to have lapsed, an application for a similar scheme has recently been submitted. I have also noted other concerns raised by interested parties, including with regard to privacy and party wall matters. However, as I have found the proposal unacceptable for other reasons I have not needed to consider these matters further in this case.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

27. The proposed development would result in harm to character and appearance, including to the SNCA, and to the living conditions of neighbouring occupants at No 39. That harm would not be outweighed by the benefits arising from the development as detailed above. The proposals would therefore not accord with the development plan taken as a whole. Consequently, the scheme would not represent sustainable development as set out in the Framework.
28. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jillian Rann
INSPECTOR