The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 April 2021 by Thomas Courtney BA(Hons) MA

Decision by Martin Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/D/21/3268682
Fieldside, Thriplow Road, Fowlmere, SG8 7QT

- 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 Myers against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- The application Ref 20/04410/HFUL, dated 27 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 20 January 2021.
- The development proposed is two storey side and single rear extensions and additional half first floor to create a chalet style dwelling with first floor rear box dormer and secondary site access from Thriplow Road.

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.

Procedural Matters

3. The Council's decision notice contains inaccuracies with regards to the addresses of neighbouring properties. Clarification was sought from the Council during the appeal process and it was confirmed that the reference to 'No.99' in the first reason for refusal and the reference to 'No.62 New Road' in the second reason for refusal are errors. Accordingly, I have only considered the effect of the development on the neighbouring property known as 'Grange View'.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:

    - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area; and
    - the effect of the development on the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers of 'Grange View', Thriplow Road, with particular regard to outlook and light.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Character & Appearance

5. The appeal site accommodates a modest brick-built bungalow located in an established residential area near the edge of the village of Fowlmere. The property features a small pitched single-storey front projection as well as a flat-roofed side garage. To the east of the appeal dwelling lies a Grade II listed thatched cottage known as 'Fieldhouse' whilst the neighbouring property to the west is known as 'Grange View'. There is a visual gap between the appeal dwelling and Grange View which is a defining aspect of the character of this part of Thriplow Road. Most of the properties in the direct vicinity of the site are modest in appearance being either bungalows or 1.5 storey dwellings with low pitched eaves.

6. The proposed alterations and extensions would represent a considerable increase in built form. The western gable, in particular, would appear unduly excessive and would jar with the surrounding context in light of its resultant bulk in close proximity to the boundary with Grange View. Whilst it would not have a full double-storey profile due to its steep chalet-like roof pitch, it would nonetheless constitute a disproportionate increase in height when compared with neighbouring dwellings. The added mass and height to the western flank of the appeal dwelling would also reduce the important visual gap with Grange View. This would reduce the openness between the two properties and thus erode the character of the street scene which is typified by the spaciousness between the dwellings on the south side of Thriplow Road.

7. Whilst I accept there are various architectural styles along Thriplow Road and that the front building line would not be breached, the resultant dwelling would appear out of scale with the surrounding built form due to its excessive bulk and height, and would thus appear incongruous in the immediate context. The development would also create a cramped appearance to the rear of the appeal property due to the combination of two pitched gables and a large dormer roof extension.

8. I acknowledge the proposal would have a limited impact on the agricultural land to the rear, however, this would not outweigh the adverse impact it would have on the architectural integrity of the host dwelling and the streetscene.

9. Given the above, I therefore find the proposal would result in unsympathetic and dominant additions that would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. I therefore consider that the proposed development would conflict with Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (the 'Local Plan') and the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF') which together seek to ensure proposals are designed to a high standard and respect local context. It would also be contrary to the National Design Guide 2019 which seeks the same.

Living Conditions

10. The proposed western gable would lie in close proximity to the neighbouring property 'Grange View'. It would undoubtedly be perceived as being an excessively tall structure when viewed from the bedroom window within the eastern elevation of Grange View. Indeed, I find it would appear obtrusive and overly dominant thus unreasonably altering the neighbouring occupiers'

outlook. Also, in light of its increased height and proximity to the common boundary and having had regard to the orientation of the buildings on-site, the development would reduce the amount of light received by the bedroom window within the eastern elevation of Grange View to an unacceptable degree.

11. Given the above, the development would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of Grange View with regards to outlook and loss of light. It would therefore conflict with Policy HQ/1 of the Local Plan which seeks to ensure developments do not adversely affect the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

Other matters

12. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting. In this respect, national policy on heritage assets, which includes listed buildings, is set out in the NPPF. At paragraph 192, it 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.

13. Fieldhouse, a grade II listed cottage, lies directly to the east of the appeal site. Its attractive traditional rural architecture makes a positive contribution to the street scene. However, I find there to be no reason or evidence from which to disagree with the Council's assessment that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the significance of the heritage asset.

14. I note the appellant highlights that the Parish Council did not object to the proposal although reference was made to the window within the side elevation of the neighbouring property with encouragement given to officers to consider whether this had implications for the living conditions of the adjoining occupiers.

15. My attention has also been drawn to other developments in the vicinity, however I have not been provided with the background and full details of these cases and therefore cannot assess to what extent they are relevant or comparable to the proposal. Notwithstanding this, on my site visit, I did not observe any comparable developments on Thriplow Road that would justify or lend support to the proposal. The garage approved under application ref. S/1299/13/FL, although located close to the eastern elevation of the appeal property, is a single storey building that is not comparable to the scale and height of the proposed development.

16. In addressing the appellant's contention, I accept that the Permitted Development process does allow for roof alterations, this appeal relates to a full planning application. Whilst national planning policy may support extending vertically, it also seeks to ensure proposals tie in with local context and do not harm the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

17. I concur with the appellant that the Council's officer report and decision notice contain some inaccuracies and typographical errors. However, this ultimately has had no bearing on my assessment of the proposal.

18. I have had regard to the appellant's comments concerning their personal circumstances and the medical condition of a family member. Whilst I sympathise with the appellant on this matter, it does not change my view as to

the merits of the scheme. I am not persuaded that the modernisation of the property in the manner proposed in order to facilitate the improvements to the living accommodation would be the only reasonable option, or that it could not be achieved without adversely impacting the character and appearance of the area and harming the living conditions of neighbouring occupants.

Recommendation

19. I consider the development would adversely impact the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area and would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of Grange View with regards to outlook and loss of light. Consequently, the development would conflict with the development plan as a whole and in particular with Policy HQ/1 of the Local Plan which seeks to ensure proposals are designed to a high standard, respect local context, and do not adversely affect the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

20. Therefore, for the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Courtney

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

Martin Seaton

INSPECTOR