The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 July 2021

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 August 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/D/21/3273133
66 High Road, Needham, HARLESTON, IP20 9LB

- 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 Peter Bee against the decision of South Norfolk District Council.
- The application Ref. 2021/0145, dated 22 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 March 2021.
- The development proposed is double garage, single storey rear extension and pitched roof to existing front porch.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the double garage. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted insofar as it relates to a single storey rear extension and pitched roof to existing front porch at 66 High Road, Needham, HARLESTON, IP20 9LB, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 2021/0145, dated 22 January 2021, and subject to the following conditions:

   1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

   2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted: 2050 – 02; 2050 – 03; 2050 – 04; and 2050 - 05.

   3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural Matter

2. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published on 20 July 2021. However, as the policies of most relevance to this proposal have not changed fundamentally it has not been necessary to seek further comments from the parties.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal site and the streetscene.

Reasons

4. The appeal property sits in a group of dwellings set back from High Road behind reasonably open and spacious front gardens, in contrast to the generally shallower front gardens of those directly opposite the site. There are a few examples of garaging and outbuildings in front gardens in the vicinity, but these are not commonplace, and the prevailing character is of open front gardens in this immediate stretch of High Road in which the appeal property is located.

5. The proposed double garage would be a large and prominent addition towards the front of the appeal site. Although there is a tall roadside hedge, this would provide only a partial screen to the building[1], and it would be particularly visible on approach from the west in views across the open front garden of the neighbouring property. Although the appellant proposes to plant a new beech hedge to the rear of the proposed garage, this would take some time to become established, and in any event the presence of a permanent structure in this forward position would still be apparent.

6. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposed building would be 2.8m from the footway, I consider this would be unacceptably close and intrusive given the size and scale of the building. In its context the proposal would be an incongruous feature that would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal site and the streetscene, and would be contrary to the requirement in Policy DM 3.8 (4) (a) of the South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document 2015 (DMP), for the scale, height, massing, form and appearance of development to have a satisfactory relationship within the site and a successful integration into the surroundings.

7. The appellant advises that there would be a gap of 5m between the building and the dwelling. Whilst I agree that this would not result in a cramped development, it would nevertheless appear as an overly large and dominant structure in this open garden.

8. The appellant has drawn attention to other front garden buildings along High Road and in the wider area. Limited details of the planning permissions granted and the reasoning behind those decisions has been supplied. However, viewed on the ground the buildings in the near vicinity appear to be either more modest in size, or set further back from the footway, or in a different part of High Road where the development pattern is less open. On the basis of the information supplied, these examples are not directly comparable in their form and context, and therefore do not support the appeal proposal.

9. However, I consider the proposed rear extension and alteration to the porch roof acceptable in terms of their design and impact on neighbouring dwellings, and in all other respects. As they are clearly severable from the proposed garage, and both physically and functionally independent, I propose to issue a split decision. I note that the submitted plan shows the conversion of the existing garage to a bedroom and bathroom, but this did not form part of the planning application or appeal, and the proposed rear extension is also independent of that element.

[1] The hedge was in full leaf at the appeal site visit, but the photograph on page 8 of the appellant's statement confirms that in winter months the building would be more visible.

10. I therefore conclude that the proposed garage would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal site and the street scene, in conflict with the design aims of Core Strategy[2] (CS) Policy 2, which requires all development to be designed to the highest possible standards and to respect local distinctiveness; and with DMP Policy DM 3.8, which in addition to the criteria outlined above, seeks to achieve high quality design and to protect and enhance existing locally distinctive character. Insofar as the garage may be considered a residential extension, it would fail to maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the streetscene and surroundings as sought by DMP Policy DM 3.4.

11. However, for the reasons outlined above I conclude that the proposed rear extension and pitched roof to the existing porch would accord with CS Policy 2, DMP Policy DM 3.8, and with the design and impact aims of DMP Policy DM 3.4.

Conditions

12. In addition to the standard time limit, I have attached a condition specifying the approved drawings as this provides certainty. Although not sought by the Council, the planning application form notes that materials would match those of the existing dwelling, and I consider it appropriate to attach such a condition in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the development and the area.

Conclusion

13. For the above reasons, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed in part and dismissed in part.

H Lock

INSPECTOR

[2] Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk, adopted 2011, and amendments adopted 2014