
Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 17 August 2021

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Tuesday 21 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/D/21/3273145

95 Station Road, Impington, Cambridge CB24 9NP

- 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 Neill Foster against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/05231/HFUL, dated 17 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is a dropped kerb outside of residence for vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a dropped kerb outside of residence for vehicular access at 95 Station Road, Impington, Cambridge CB24 9NP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/05231/HFUL, dated 17 December 2020, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Location Plan; Site Block Plan.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until pedestrian visibility splays of 2m x 2m have been provided each side of the vehicular access measured from and along the highway boundary. Such splays shall be within the red line of the site and shall thereafter be maintained free from obstruction exceeding 0.6m above the level of the adopted public highway.
 - 4) The driveway shall be constructed so that its falls and levels are such that no water from the site drains across or onto the adopted public highway.
 - 5) The driveway shall be constructed using a bound material to prevent debris spreading onto the adopted public highway.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have omitted a superfluous reference to a highways application from the description of development.
3. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021. The main parties have been provided with the opportunity to comment on the relevance of this revision to the Framework to their respective cases.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:

- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Histon and Impington Conservation Area (the CA);
- The effect of the proposal on highway and pedestrian safety.

Reasons

Conservation Area

5. The appeal dwelling is located at the corner of Station Road and School Lane, a narrow cul-de-sac serving a handful of properties. The Council concedes that the proposed dropped kerb and crossover would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the CA. Rather, its concern is with the loss of the established hedge to the front boundary of the site and introduction of hard surfacing to the front garden.
6. I saw Station Road to have a quite varied character, with a mix of dwelling sizes, styles and ages which evokes a long period of gradual development. This variety also extends to the boundary treatments. Whilst I saw a number of hedges to properties, it could not be said that this is the prevailing boundary treatment, as walls, fencing, railings and open frontages with visible hard landscaping are all present. Open or semi-open frontages are also present to nearby properties, including Nos 87, 93 and 97. Given this context, the partial removal of the front hedge would not disrupt a consistent pattern, nor would the open frontage or hard landscaping appear out-of-step with the mixed surrounding townscape.
7. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the CA, and no conflict would arise with Policies HQ/1 and NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) (the SCLP), which together require development to be of high quality design that preserves or enhances the character of the local urban area and sustain and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the district's historic environment.

Highway and Pedestrian Safety

8. The proposal would create an off-street parking area to the front of the dwelling. The dwelling has two existing off-street spaces in front of a garage at the rear of the site. The Council's concern, drawn from the comments of the local highway authority, is that the parking area would be insufficient in size to enable a vehicle to turn within the site. As a result, vehicles could not enter and leave in a forward gear, necessitating reversing manoeuvres either into the property or from the property onto the highway which would interfere with the free flow of traffic.
9. I note that Station Road was historically the main route through Impington, but it is now secondary to the B1049 which runs parallel to it as the main thoroughfare. Consequently, Station Road appears to function more for local access than through traffic. This is reflected in the presence of speed bumps along the road. I observed traffic to be relatively infrequent, around one vehicle every 30 seconds, and travelling within the speed limit. I recognise this

was only a snapshot for a few minutes, but it suggests that the volume of traffic is not excessive or continuous.

10. The proposed access would be located close to the junction with School Lane. However, this is a small cul-de-sac serving a limited number of dwellings. Consequently, traffic on the lane is likely to be very infrequent, and I am satisfied that no significant risk of conflict would exist between users of School Lane and occupants of the appeal dwelling. There are also several examples of driveways to neighbouring properties which do not facilitate turning within the site. I am provided with no evidence from the Council that these existing off-street spaces have proven unsafe for vehicles and pedestrians on Station Road.
11. Moreover, there are double yellow lines to the corners of the junction with School Lane, and to the opposite side is a white line in front of the access to No 93. Therefore, there would be a stretch of the road to either side of the access which would not be subject to on-street parking. This would add to the visibility for drivers leaving the appeal site to see oncoming traffic, and vice versa. Given the low frequency of traffic that I saw on Station Road, and that vehicles would only be likely to exit the appeal site once or twice a day, for the most part, I am satisfied that the risk of conflict with other road users is low.
12. In reaching a view, I recognise the Council's concern with vehicles reversing into the highway, but I am also mindful that the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that permission should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. For the reasons set out, I conclude that the proposed access would not lead to an unacceptable impact on highway safety. No conflict would therefore arise with Policy HQ/1 of the SCLP in terms of the requirement that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues.

Other Matters

13. I note concerns from an interested party in respect of on-street parking pressure along Station Road. I saw parking to be prevalent along the length of the road, with parking restricted to 30 minutes in places. I understand the presence of several businesses adds to parking demand. However, the area immediately alongside the appeal site appears not to be restricted, and I saw parking to be more sporadic to the north of the appeal site. The proposal would effectively replace an on-street space with an off-street space. The Council has not raised parking pressure as a concern, and based on my observations, I am satisfied that the proposal would not lead to a material loss of parking availability or harmful increase in parking pressure.

Conditions

14. In addition to the standard time limit condition, a condition specifying the approved plans is necessary to provide certainty. Further conditions are necessary to require pedestrian visibility splays, construction of the access in a bound material and with a fall so that water is not discharged onto the public highway. These conditions are necessary in the interest of highway safety.
15. The Council has also requested that the width of the access be limited to 3.75 metres and not 4.9 metres as sought, but the precise reason for this, beyond

general highway safety concern, is not explained. If anything, a wider entrance would make access and egress easier. Given other properties have accesses of similar width, I see no justification for this condition.

16. Where necessary, I have amended the wording of the Council's suggested conditions to ensure they accord with the tests of conditions set out in the Framework. This includes omitting text which constitutes an informative.

Conclusion

17. I have found that the proposal would accord with the development plan, taken as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate that permission should nevertheless be withheld. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

K Savage

INSPECTOR