
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 September 2021

by **David Spencer BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 October 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/D/21/3277085

Highway Cottage, Pyecroft Lane, Walpole St Peter, Norfolk PE14 7PL

- 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 Merton against the decision of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00275/F, dated 29 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is 2 storey rear extension to form family living area and kitchen with 3 bedrooms and bath.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a 2 storey rear extension to form family living area and kitchen with 3 bedrooms and bath at Highway Cottage, Pyecroft Lane, Walpole St Peter, Norfolk PE14 7PL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/00275/F, dated 29 January 2021, and subject to the following conditions:
 - i) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
 - ii) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Planning – Site and Location Plans (January 2021); Planning – Floorplans and Elevations Rev B (January 2021); and Existing Dwelling (December 2020)
 - iii) There shall be no development above slab level unless and until details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of Highway Cottage and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. Highway Cottage is a small vernacular dwelling, one room in depth and with a limited height. It is of simple and uncluttered appearance with generally white render walls and plain tiled roof. At the time of my site visit there was an additional single storey element at the eastern gable end of the cottage. There

is also a range of small, single storey outbuildings to the rear of the dwelling. The original scale and traditional character of Highway Cottage, and its context within a spacious, verdant plot, can be appreciated from within both Pyecroft Lane and Chalk Road.

4. The footprint and massing of the proposed extension is significantly larger than the host dwelling such that the appeal proposal would in effect function as a new dwelling to which the retained vernacular cottage would provide ancillary accommodation. In the context of the spacious plot and the surrounding scale and pattern of residential development the proposed scale and massing of the appeal proposal would not result in a conspicuously large dwelling in this part of Walpole St Peter or a cramped form of development when viewed from either Pyecroft Lane or Chalk Road. There are numerous other large dwellings in the immediate vicinity to which the scale of the appeal proposal would reasonably relate to.
5. In terms of the relationship between the host dwelling and the proposed development, the appeal proposal would dominate by virtue of its scale, massing and moderately higher ridge heights. Whilst in some perspectives, including from immediately outside Highway Cottage within Pyecroft Lane, the relationship between the host dwelling and the appeal proposal would appear awkward in terms of disparity of scales, particularly the volume of proposed roofspace, this largely stems from the uncommonly quaint scale of the original cottage. The appeal proposal has sought to address the relationship through a degree of separation provided by a modest single storey link and I find this arrangement would be effective in enabling the host cottage to be positively experienced as a distinct building. In terms of providing modern habitable accommodation to current building regulations, the appeal proposal is appropriately controlled in its scale, including its moderate 1½ to 2 storey height. Overall, I find the potential harm from the non-subservient scale of the proposed development when seen against the host dwelling to be very limited.
6. In most other perspectives, the appeal proposal would be read as a suitably separate element such that the chronology of the original host cottage and the later addition of the appeal proposal would be readily discernible. The proposed degree of timber cladding finish would provide an appropriate visual contrast to distinguish the two buildings. Whilst timber cladding does not appear to be a common material in the locality, there is some variety of materials in this part of Walpole St Peter such that I do not find the proposed use of timber cladding, on a spacious, verdant plot, to be especially harmful. A single large dormer opening is proposed on the east facing roofspace. This would be glimpsed from Pyecroft Lane to the east of the appeal site but due to its orientation and depth within the plot it would not be a particularly conspicuous feature. In any event I observed numerous other examples of more prominent dormers in this part of the village such that I do not find the scale or position of this proposed opening to be harmful to local character.
7. Whilst I have found some very limited harm in terms of variance in scale between the host dwelling and what is proposed, this arises from the unique circumstance of the particularly diminutive scale of Highway Cottage. In all other respects the proposed design would appropriately respond to the local context and would clearly articulate the appeal proposal as a separate progression of development on the site rather than as a constrained echo or mimic of the host dwelling. I attach appreciable weight to the appellant's

strategy to retain Highway Cottage as a non-listed vernacular Fenland cottage when a reasonable alternative approach may have involved its loss altogether.

8. I therefore conclude that the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of Highway Cottage and its surroundings would not be significantly harmful. The proposal would comply with Policies CS06 and CS08 of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2011 which require development in the rural areas to maintain local character and a high quality environment including by achieving high standards of sustainable design and ensuring that the scale and layout of development enhances the quality of the environment. The proposal would accord with Policy DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 which requires all development to protect and enhance the amenity of the wider environment including, amongst other things, ensuring that the scale, height, massing, materials and layout of a development respond sensitively and sympathetically to the local setting. The proposal would also accord with the general design expectations at paragraphs 126 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
9. I have taken account of all other matters raised but there is nothing that leads me to conclude other than that the appeal should be allowed for the reasons given. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has indicated a number of proposed conditions which would be necessary were the proposal to be allowed. I have considered these in light of the content of the Planning Practice Guidance and paragraph 56 of the NPPF.
10. In addition to the standard time limit condition, a condition setting out the approved plans is necessary for the avoidance of doubt and to ensure proper planning. Notwithstanding the information provided as part of the planning application, a further condition requiring details of the external materials to be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA would be necessary to ensure a satisfactory appearance. To avoid delays in commencing development I have made the condition applicable once construction has reached slab level.

David Spencer

Inspector.