

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 January 2022

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31ST January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/D/21/3284158

8 Pitts Square, Hingham NR9 4LD

- 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 Mrs Santa-Ana against the decision of South Norfolk Council.
 - The application Ref 2021/0258, dated 5 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is two-storey side extension, single-storey rear extension and new entrance porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. An application for costs was made by Mrs Santa-Ana against South Norfolk Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Hingham Conservation Area, in which the appeal property is located.

Reasons

4. The Hingham Conservation Area comprises two distinct areas, the main part of the village and a smaller group of dwellings to the south, which includes those in Pitts Square. The *Hingham Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Guidelines* document says that the original houses and large gardens in Pitts Square are modest in scale but set formally around a short cul-de-sac.
 5. The document goes on to say that Pitts Square comprises a group of modest cottages of clay lump construction and originally built as four pairs of semi-detached dwellings, symmetrically laid out in large gardens. The square's original architectural unity has been compromised by a variety of modern window replacements and extensions, although the original form of the cottages is still apparent. All the dwellings in the square, including No 8, are identified as unlisted buildings of townscape significance. As such, Pitts Square
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- makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
6. I note that the Council's concerns about the effects of the proposal relate to the two-storey side extension rather than the porch or rear extension, or the materials that would be used. The side extension would effectively double the width of the cottage's frontage and extend the roof at the same height as that of the original building. As such, it would materially alter the form and character of the original modest cottage. However, this is not uncharacteristic of dwellings in the square as most have been extended to the side in a similar manner to the appeal proposal.
 7. The adjoining dwelling also has a side extension, but the height of this is set-down from the original roof height and set-back from the frontage. Consequently, it is seen as subordinate to the original building, the form of which is retained and discernible. While similar side extensions to the appeal proposal exist in the square, these have been undertaken to both paired dwellings, thereby retaining a degree of visual uniformity between them. In the case of No 8, the proposed extension would not be subordinate to the original dwelling and so would contrast unfavourably with the alterations to the adjoining property. It would, therefore, unbalance the pair of dwellings and would be an incongruous and uncharacteristic addition to the two adjoining properties, both in its own right and by contrast to the other paired cottages within the square.
 8. There is some tree cover in the large front gardens, but despite this the extended appeal property and adjoining dwelling would be seen from Hall Moor Road and the entrance to Pitts Square. While the harmful effects of development in a conservation area are not dependent on such views being available, these effects would nonetheless be readily apparent from the surrounding area.
 9. I acknowledge the appellant's contention that due regard should be had to the requirements for the layout of the extended dwelling and related limitations. However, the statutory requirement in exercising planning functions in conservation areas, which I must have regard to, is that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area¹.
 10. I note also the appellant's concerns about the Council's decision compared to comments made prior to determination; and about the level of engagement and apparent lack of a site visit. However, these procedural matters do not have a direct bearing on the planning merits of the proposal.
 11. Therefore, for the reasons given, I find that the proposal would, specifically in respect of the two-storey side extension, fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Hingham Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation². Based on the above findings, I

¹ Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

² Paragraph 199.

consider the harm to be less than substantial in this instance, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.

12. Under such circumstances, the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal³. The appellant indicates that such benefit is achieved by the unified design and use of appropriate materials. However, as found above, the side extension would not preserve the area's character and appearance. Accordingly, there are no public benefits that would overcome the harm that has been found with regard to the side extension, the principal purpose of which relates to a private benefit with regard to occupation and use of the appeal property.
13. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the proposed two-storey side extension would not preserve the character or appearance of the Hingham Conservation Area. Consequently, it is contrary to the following policies: Policy DM4.10 of the Council's Development Management Policies document (DMP), which concerns the effect of development on heritage assets; and Policy 2 of the Joint Core Strategy and Policies DM1.4, DM3.4 and DM3.8 of the DMP, which concern design quality and that development should not harm local character and appearance. The proposal is also contrary to section 16 of the Framework.

Other Matters

14. I have had regard to the concerns raised by an interested party. The proposed two storey extension is not sufficiently close to neighbouring properties to result in overshadowing, while the large rear-facing window would serve a bathroom and, therefore, would include obscured glass. As such, there would be no harm to neighbouring living conditions.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above it is concluded that the appeal should not succeed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR

³ Paragraph 202.