
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 August 2022

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/D/22/3299215

Foxfield House, School Road, Great Wratting, Suffolk, CB9 7HA

- 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 Gary Fox against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref. DC/22/0421/FUL, dated 7 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 4 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'revised cart lodge in relation to home approved under application DC/19/0534/FUL - DC/21/1336/VAR'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The site address was identified primarily by its grid reference on the application form, and for clarity I have used that provided on the decision notice and appeal form.
3. The description of development in the banner heading above has been taken from the planning application form. In Part E of the appeal form a different wording has been entered, but as the parties have not provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed I have used the one given on the original application.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Great Wratting Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. A dwelling is under construction on the appeal site, which sits between other dwellings and the utilitarian but well-screened buildings of a water treatment works. The site is within Great Wratting Conservation Area, which contains a mix of buildings in terms of construction period, scale, design and materials. Although there is immature planting alongside the front boundary, the appeal site is open and visually prominent in the street scene, particularly on approach from the north due to a bend in the road.

6. Planning permission¹ has been granted at the site for a single-storey garage with a further enclosed bay. The approved plans give a dimensioned ridge height of 'circa 4582mm'. The part of the building directed towards the road had a deep roof sloping towards a low eaves.
7. The proposed cart lodge would be wider than the approved building, and much taller to accommodate first-floor space. The appellant advises that the cart lodge design takes its architectural language from the main house. It would also share the asymmetrical roof design of the approved cart lodge, but its eaves would be higher and the deep roof slope would be interrupted by a projecting window. The resultant height and size of the building would be significant, and it would appear overly large and dominant in the street scene.
8. I share the view of a previous appeal Inspector² that there is no particular pattern to buildings and spaces along the road. There is no consistent building line and the principle of siting a cart lodge in front of the house has been accepted. However, domestic outbuildings in the area appear to be more modest in size and/or more discreetly positioned relative to the host house than proposed in this case. The approved cart lodge was more low-key in scale, thereby mitigating its visual impact in a prominent position in the front garden. I do not find that the 'infilling' principles referred to by the appellant would be relevant to the siting of a large outbuilding.
9. I note the appellant's view that the dwelling under construction is of decent size and that it will have a very clear presence on the site. However, these factors do not address the overall scale of the outbuilding in its own right, and due to its position and the road alignment it would be highly visible and discordant in the street scene. Although the submitted layout plan indicates planting along the southern shared boundary, the proposed building would be viewed against the backdrop of solid fencing, with planting on the water treatment works doing little to soften the effect of the structure in the street scene. Landscaping on site may offer some screening potential in the longer term, but given its height the proposed building is likely to be visible above roadside planting and in views across the access.
10. The appellant has drawn attention to the car park, tables, chairs, marquees and associated paraphernalia at a nearby public house that is also within the conservation area. However, whilst these all have a visual impact in the street scene, they are typical features to support the use. The marquees are set back into the site and not prominently positioned near the road. I do not consider the visual impact between tables, chairs and parasols to be comparable to a sizeable and permanent building. Moreover, the public house is the exception in the street scene and not a defining characteristic.
11. There is a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in exercising planning functions, and this is reflected in DMP³ Policies DM2 and DM17. Amongst other criteria, these policies seek to preserve or enhance the setting of, or views into and out of, a Conservation Area, and to require development to be of appropriate scale, form, height, massing, alignment and detailed design which respect the area's character and its setting.

¹ As part of applications DC/19/0534/FUL & DC/21/1336/VAR

² APP/E3525/W/18/3196861 - erection of a dwelling.

³ Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Local Plan Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015

12. Having regard to paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area, but this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant indicates that a benefit would be the parking of cars within the building rather than in front of it, but as the submitted plans also show parking spaces on the opposite side of the site I regard this benefit as minimal. Moreover, a covered parking space was achievable with the approved scheme. No obvious public benefits would result from the increased footprint and the first-floor space that would materially add to the height and bulk of the building.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Great Wrattling Conservation Area as a result of its height, scale, and siting, contrary to the aims of DMP Policies DM2 and DM17. It would also conflict with paragraph 202 of the Framework, there being no obvious public benefits to outweigh the identified harm.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR