

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2022

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 October 2022

Appeal Reference: APP/C1570/W/22/3295743
'Pandemonium', Thaxted Road, Wimbish CB10 2XP

- 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 M Slade against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application reference: UTT/21/3612/HHF, dated 3 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 31 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a two-storey side extension with a single-storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in a rural landscape, on the road between Thaxted and Saffron Walden. Thaxted Road, the B 184, is a through route that usually carries a significant traffic flow, although this was reduced at the time of the site visit as a result of roadworks. In the vicinity of the appeal site, the road has wide verges and is mainly lined with dense hedges and mature trees.
4. There is some built development along the road frontages, however, including a group of buildings on the south-west frontage that includes the appeal site and is referred to as 'Causewayend' or 'Causeway End'). These buildings are set back from the road and 'Pandemonium', like its immediate neighbours, is well screened from public views along the road.
5. The land opposite is bounded by a dense hedge and trees, with agricultural land beyond. 'Swallows Farm' to the north-west is a thatched and timbered building behind a high front hedge, dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both 'Swallows Farm' and the barn that is now attached to it are listed, Grade II, as buildings of special architectural or historic interest. 'Causewayend House' and 'Causewayend Farm' are located somewhat further away to the south-east.

6. 'Pandemonium', previously known as 'Causewayend Cottage' (or 'Causeway End Cottage'), is a large house with an extensive garden. The main part of the house is parallel to the road, with extensions at the rear, and it appears to have evolved over many years, judging from the plan form and the building's external appearance, although there is little submitted evidence about the history of the building. The house has rendered walls with some decorative patterning under a main pitched, tiled roof. The north-western gable end has a jettied projection at first floor level, although it is not clear why this form of construction was chosen.
7. The evidence that has been presented about the history of the house is limited but the form and materials of the building indicate that it is of some historic and architectural interest (at least) and that it should be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.
8. The front of the site is well screened, including by a high security gate, and a garage building is located in front of the house itself. At the time of the site visit, the front part of the site was occupied by a number of vehicles and other equipment and paraphernalia. The rear garden is attractive and carefully tended and extends some distance behind the house, to the south-west, laid mainly to grass with trees and shrubs.
9. It is now proposed to alter the house by extending the main element of the building to the north-west, based on a two-storey extension in a linear form, adding a single-storey garden room to the rear. On the ground floor, an extended kitchen would be created (as well as the garden room). On the first floor a large new bedroom would be created, in association with some alterations to the internal layout, with access to a new balcony on the flat roof of the garden room.
10. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' is aimed at achieving good design standards generally (notably at Section 12), by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history (while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change). It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, which includes protecting existing amenities and providing good standards of accommodation.
11. In addition, provisions in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 impose specific obligations on those considering whether to grant planning permission for development that would affect the setting of a listed building. In such cases, it is necessary to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting. Those formal requirements are reinforced by the 'National Planning Policy Framework', especially at Section 16, which emphasises the importance of conserving and enhancing the historic environment, which includes non-designated heritage assets.
12. "Saved" Policies in 'Uttlesford Local Plan' (which have Development Plan status although the Local Plan dates from 2005) reflect these basic concerns. Policy GEN2 deals with design considerations in broad terms, while Policy H8 is specifically relevant to house extensions. Policy ENV2 is concerned with "Development affecting Listed Buildings", including development which would affect the setting of a listed building.

13. The Council's 'Supplementary Planning Document – Home Extensions' (which was adopted in November 2005) is also relevant, though it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan.
14. The proposed extension would add to the essentially linear form of the existing building in a logical way and I accept that such a design approach could be valid in this case. Indeed, it appears that the house may have evolved in this way in the past. Nevertheless, the scheme would remove the existing jettied projection on the gable elevation. This appears to be a significant historic and architectural feature of the building, the loss of which would be very regrettable, therefore.
15. There is an existing rear projection from the house, partially single storey, which also follows a traditional form for such extensions, but the current proposal incorporates features on the rear elevation that would be awkward in their context. The new balcony, edged with wrought iron railings, would be alien to the original form and the proposed rear gable feature would be unduly fussy and incongruous as an addition to the heritage asset.
16. In short, I am convinced that the appeal proposals would harm the character and appearance of the existing house and that the scheme ought not to be allowed, therefore.
17. Nevertheless, the house is secluded on its plot and is set well away from its side boundary with 'Swallows Farm'. The proposed extension would not have a significant impact on the setting of the nearby listed buildings, or on the wider surroundings.
18. I accept that the proposed extension would be a useful addition to the accommodation at 'Pandemonium' but, even so, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the character and appearance of the host building outweighs the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR