

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 October 2022

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/22/3298371

1 and 2 Symonds Lane, Grantchester, Cambridgeshire CB3 9NU

- 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 and Mrs B Trushell against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00524/FUL, dated 4 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 4 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is the consolidation of end-of-terrace and mid-terrace dwellings (presently Nos 1 & 2 Symonds Lane) into one single dwelling, including providing a 2 storey rear extension to No 1 Symonds Lane, providing a single storey full width extension to rear of No 2 Symonds Lane and providing a porch extension with covered way to front of No 2 Symonds Lane.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Grantchester Conservation Area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Symonds Lane is a short drive leading from the main village street, Coton Road, to a handsome and well detailed terrace of (originally) 3 houses, within the village conservation area. Typically for this side of Coton Road, the houses are set well back from the main street, behind frontage landscaping. The informal arrangement of the buildings and the trees and hedges give this part of the village a verdant, rural character.
4. The Council's Grantchester Conservation Area appraisal (CAA) records that 2 farmsteads on Coton Road, including the grade II listed Lacies Farm which sits next to the appeal site, are the oldest buildings in this part of the conservation area. The CAA advises that between the 2 farmsteads a number of houses and cottages have sprung up in the 20th Century, in large and abundantly planted plots. These include 1 to 3 Symonds Lane. The Council advises that these houses were built by a noted local builder, but this is not

mentioned in the CAA and the terrace is not included in the CAA's Buildings of Special Note. I note that, prior to the appellants' ownership, Nos 1 and 2 have undergone some changes including replacement upvc windows. Despite these points, the terrace is a handsome and well detailed building of traditional proportions which retains much of its historic character and is a positive feature within the conservation area.

5. The Council raises no objection to the combination of the 2 houses into 1, which it considers does not require planning permission in any case. It appears that this change has already taken place. The Council also accepts the proposed front extension. Its concern is about effect of the proposed rear extensions on the building and the conservation area.
6. The terrace was designed with Nos 1 and 3 as gable fronted, deep plan bookends with the wider fronted No 2 in the middle. The proposed single storey extension at the back of No 2 would fit in well and discreetly with this form.
7. The proposed 2 storey extension to No 1 would continue the house's linear form further to the rear, at the same height, not far off doubling the depth of the building. Although the existing materials and detailing would be replicated, this would create an overly long and awkward structure with no articulation or set down to break up the massing and mark the change from original to extension. This would substantially change the whole building's proportions and scale, harming its more modest and harmonious existing character. The 2 storey rear extension would thus undermine the architectural quality of the terrace and its contribution to the conservation area.
8. A key argument put forward in favour of the proposal is that the 2 storey extension would not be seen from Cotton Road and there would be no other public views. I consider that the 2 storey extension would be visible from the street, but that this view would be very limited. Whilst public views are important, however, they are not the only consideration in regard to development affecting heritage assets. The proposed extension would also be seen by residents, neighbours and their visitors and this is not insignificant.
9. On the positive side, I agree with the Council that the extensions would be far enough away from Lacies Farm, with a clear visual break provided by trees in between, so that there would be no significant impact on the setting of that listed building.
10. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) furthermore says that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets. I conclude that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. It therefore conflicts with the aims of Policies HQ/1 and NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the Framework, to secure high quality design that sustains and enhances the special character and distinctiveness of the historic environment.
11. The harm to the conservation area would, in the terms of the Framework, be 'less than substantial' and would be towards the lower end of that broad spectrum. Paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that less than substantial

harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

12. The appellants say that the building requires upkeep and that the proposed works would enable this, making the combined property viable for use as family home for future generations. It is also proposed to change upvc windows back to Crittall style windows. I have seen nothing, however, to show that the house or houses would not be viable and capable of improvement and maintenance without the proposed extensions. The improvements to windows, while welcome, would not be of sufficient benefit to outweigh the other harm identified.
13. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR