



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 September 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 November 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/W/21/3287788

Station House, Station Road, Takeley CM22 6QA

- 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 LA Property Services against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref: UTT/21/1683/FUL dated 18 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 5 November 2021.
 - The application is for refurbish and remodel the existing station to provide a 5 bed House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). Erection of 1 no. dwelling between the station and the adjacent houses.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area and the Non Designated Heritage Asset that is Station House.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is the former railway station building and station house associated with the former Takeley Railway whose line once ran along the recreational route that is now the Flitch Way. The Flitch Way runs along the former track bed and links Takeley to other settlements nearby as an important active and recreational travel route. The former Takeley Station maintains much of its platform and the station building itself appears as a relatively intact and attractive example of a typical village railway station building of its time.
4. The building is now located along Sycamore Way although its address is still Station Road, referring to the road that leads over the nearby railway bridge. Sycamore Way now serves both the former station and surrounding new development, including a relatively recent block of town houses adjacent to the old station itself. Although this new development is visible around the station the building maintains its separation and visibility within the area and can still be easily understood as an historic railway building with the Flitch Way providing further context and understanding of this.
5. It is my understanding that the railway itself was operational from around 1869 until 1952 and that the railway building dates to around the later 19th century.

The station is constructed of a light buff brick in Flemish Bond and sports a simple but effective Neo Classical design consisting of well proportioned openings, simple architraves, quoins, keystones and brick string courses.

6. The building consists of three relatively distinct elements consisting of two single storey ranges, presumably one time the central of these was the former ticket hall that gave access onto the platform, and a two storey Station House building that I consider was possibly used as offices or by the Station Master. This two storey element is positioned at right angles to the track but adjoining the rest of the station to the rear.
7. Inside the former ticket hall the building is now housing electronic workshops and storage and I saw on my site visit that there were bedrooms to the upper floor of the two storey Station House wing of the building. The building has some boarded up windows but addresses both Sycamore Way and the Flitch Way onto which remnants of the station's former platform still exists.
8. Due to the building's age, local importance, links to the area's railway heritage (and latterly the Flitch Way) and its simple but attractive architectural style, I consider that the building exhibits several heritage values including Aesthetic, Historic, and Communal values. As such I consider that it would be correct that the former Takeley Station House building should be considered an important Non Designated Heritage Asset for the local area.
9. In light of this paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) confirms that the significance of the Non Designated Heritage Asset should be taken into account in determining this appeal. The Framework also requires me to take a balanced judgement with regards this proposal and its impact upon the significance of the Station House building itself.
10. The appeal proposal consists of two distinct but interrelated elements. These primarily include the provision of an existing grassed and garden area to the side of the former station to be used for the construction of a new, stand alone dwelling, along with the conversion of the existing Station building into a five bedroom House of Multiple Occupation (HMO).
11. Firstly the HMO would see the former station building converted more fully into residential accommodation where the main former Ticket Hall would be subdivided to form two bed sit bedrooms with en suite facilities and a third bedroom would be located to the ground floor of the two storey Station House. To the upper floor of the Station House there would be two more bedrooms. The occupants would have cycle storage within the building but would seemingly have just one living/kitchen area to share on the ground floor of the Station House. This kitchen would be one of the smaller rooms within the building and would appear to represent the only area of communal living space available.
12. Externally the HMO would have around 75 square metres of external amenity space largely located upon the former platform area of the old station and as such this would be linear and narrow. To its front would be hardstanding for parking and a footpath would give access to the former front door of the principal two storey range of the building.
13. The proposed new build plot would utilise an area that is currently used as a private, walled garden, for the existing occupants and would remove this area

of garden from the ownership of the HMO. As such the two storey Station House would have habitable room windows still directly overlooking this space, but would not have access to it. The area would therefore become the private rear garden for a new build plot that would sit to the front side of the two storey Station House.

14. The proposed new build would be a detached two storey house that attempts to echo the Neo Classical elements of Station House itself through the use of quoins, buff brick and UPVC four pane windows. The building would be sited with its frontage parallel to Sycamore Way but would be slightly staggered. In so doing the proposed house would stand forthright to the front of the former Station to such an extent that the two storey Station House element of the building would be very much obscured by the proposed dwelling.
15. In assessing this appeal I am mindful of Policy GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 that seeks to achieve well designed places through new development being compatible in terms of scale, form, layout and appearance as well as protecting the living conditions of neighbours through sensitive development. Such recommendations are reflected by both The Essex Design Guide Supplementary Design Guidance (SDG) and The Framework itself which considers the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable places as being fundamental within the planning process.
16. The proposal before me seeks to reflect the former Station building through reflecting certain architectural elements contained within it. However, despite this, the proposed new dwelling would dangerously compete with the prominence of the Station building by being located so proud of the Non Designated Heritage Asset. In so doing the new dwelling would encroach upon the existing principal setting of the Station House and cause significant harm to the understanding of the historic building.
17. Through the proposed dwelling being sited in such a position it would not only largely hide much of the Station House, but it would also need to rely upon contrived design details such as an unnaturally shallow pitched roof and staggered front elevation in order to attempt to relieve this impact. Although the architectural articulation is now a pastiche, I consider that this could work were it not for the fundamental fault in terms of the building's siting, layout and proximity to the Station House, which negates any attempts at Architectural aesthetics to improve the building.
18. Furthermore, the proposed rear garden of the property would be directly overlooked by occupants using the habitable rooms of the Station House itself. As such, I also consider that the proposed new dwelling would not secure future residents' living conditions through being in such close proximity to the Station House.
19. In terms of the HMO, although the principle of conversion would appear acceptable, I am concerned through the removal of this garden area that would leave only contrived remnants of limited amenity space available to residents that I consider would be largely substandard in terms of quality. Further to this I consider that the communal living spaces within the proposed conversion would aggravate this lack of amenity space through the provision of only a single, modest communal kitchen area within which all five separate residents would be expected to use.

20. When taken cumulatively therefore this proposal represents a significant overdevelopment of this site that not only undermines the significance and setting of the Non Designated Heritage Asset, but also represents a contrived and poor design response to this context that would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, as well as the future living conditions of residents who would inhabit this scheme.
21. Even when this significant harm is balanced against the shortfall in Housing Supply that Uttlesford District Council can demonstrate, the benefits of this proposal are not convincing enough for me to allow this appeal contrary to the very clear Policy guidance as set out in The Framework.
22. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 as well as the guidance of the Essex Design Guide and the overriding Policy requirements contained within The Framework that seeks to protect the historic environment and achieve well designed and sustainable places.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR