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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2022

**by Robert Fallon B.Sc. (Hons) PGDipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 14 December 2022**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/21/3286745**

**Land between 2 and 4 High Street, Great Eversden, CB23 1HN**

- 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 E. Wells against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
  - The application Ref 21/01102/FUL dated 20 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 11 August 2021.
  - The development proposed is described on the application form as "Erection of dwelling to replace that granted under S/805/18/FL."
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, the setting of the non-designated heritage asset at No 2 High Street and the setting of the Grade II Listed building at No 4 High Street.

### Reasons

3. The appeal site fronts onto the High Street, which is primarily characterised by detached properties of a traditional architectural style set on large spacious plots. The prevailing building line varies with most properties set back from the road with differing depths of front garden and a small number that directly abut the public footway.
4. To the north-west of the appeal site lies 'The Limes' (No 4 High Street), a detached Grade II Listed double-fronted dwelling constructed circa 1840 of clunch ashlar and finished in an off-white colour. Its significance is derived from both its architectural design and setting, the former of which includes; (1) its formal, almost symmetrical, architectural style; (2) the articulation of its front elevation with pilasters, horizontal banding and semi-circular front door arch with fanlight above 6 panel door; (3) the materials used in its construction (ashlar clunch and slate); and (4) timber sash windows with stone sills. The significance of its setting is derived from it being sited close to the road with a short front garden and the lack of any large buildings in close proximity to either side of it. When taken collectively, these characteristics give the building a prominent appearance within the street scene, which helps to promote its significance.

5. To the south-east of the appeal site lies 'The Hoops'<sup>1</sup>, a detached 2-storey building finished in white painted brick/white render with slate and plain tile roofs and timber sash windows. This lies on a significant corner plot in the village at a staggered crossroads junction, which together with the lack of adjacent built-form, gives the building a prominent character and appearance. By reason of its significant age and locally distinctive architectural design, I consider it to be a non-designated heritage asset.
6. In common with many rural villages that have expanded during the twentieth century, there is a clear distinction between the traditional character of the village core and the more suburban forms of residential development that surround it. The appeal site is positioned in the former, where any scheme should be sympathetic to its essential character. Although such respect for context does not require pastiche solutions, it does necessitate an integrity of design of spaces and buildings with a clear sense of place.
7. The proposed dwelling would be set well back from the road, which would result in an irregular building line in keeping with other parts of the High Street. However, by reason of its substantial scale, width, depth, bold front elevation columns, multiple rear projections, oversized window/door openings, double width garage and extensive use of stark antique-white render, it would dominate the immediate area, and diminish the prominence of the Limes, which would be harmful to its setting and special historic interest. For similar reasons, it would also undermine the prominence of the Hoops.
8. Although the previously approved scheme<sup>2</sup> would be closer to the road, I am not of the view that it would be as prominent as that now proposed because of the latter's more substantial scale, greater width, more complicated roof form, deeper rear outrigger projection and the use of striking antique-white render.
9. I recognise that the façade of the proposed dwelling incorporates some elements of the Limes and other historic properties into its design such as horizontal banding, vertical columns and the use of render. However, it also incorporates features which are not found in locally distinctive dwellings such as a large double width internal garage and oversized non-descript window openings with a very low proportion of wall to window, both of which are commonly found on post-war suburban-style dwellings and do not reinforce the essence of what makes the character of the historic village core special.
10. Furthermore, whilst I recognise that the dwelling has been designed with a low pitched hipped roof to reduce its prominence, the height of this appears disproportionate to the overall width and form of the building and gives it an incongruous compressed appearance.
11. In light of the above, whilst I recognise that the appellant's design inspiration for the scheme was that of a village manor house or classic country house, it is my view that other than it being large, it fails to achieve this in a way that would enable it to harmoniously integrate with the architectural design and setting of the neighbouring heritage assets (the Limes and the Hoops), both of which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

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<sup>1</sup> Appears to be use as an Indian Restaurant.

<sup>2</sup> Planning Permission S/0805/18/FL for a detached dwelling and garage.

12. I recognise that public views of the development from the High Street and Chapel Lane would be partially filtered by existing and proposed landscaping, but it would nonetheless still be clearly visible within the same field of view as the Limes and the Hoops, which would intensify the harmful impact described above. Furthermore, I cannot be certain that the existing and proposed landscaping that screens the development would be retained in perpetuity, which might further expose it. In any event, screening ought never to be regarded as a substitute for well-designed development within the setting of heritage assets.
13. In support of the scheme, the appellant has referred to the presence of other post-war modern architectural styles in the vicinity of the appeal site, most notably at Nos 3-9 High Street. However, these only serve to reinforce my concerns about the proposed development in that they stand as an unremarkable suburban architectural style not in keeping with the locally distinctive character of the High Street by reason of their large non-descript window openings, low pitched roofs and prominent garages and/or associated frontage parking.
14. In view of the above, I conclude that the development would be; (1) harmful to the character and appearance of the area and the setting of the Hoops; and (2) not preserve the setting of the Limes in accordance with S66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies NH/14 and HQ/1 of the Local Plan<sup>3</sup>, which collectively seek to ensure, amongst other things, that new development is compatible with its location and appropriate in scale, mass, form, design and proportion in relation to the surrounding area and that new development sustains and enhances the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets.
15. I also find that the scheme conflicts with Paragraph 130 of the Framework<sup>4</sup> which seeks, amongst other things; (a) development that is sympathetic to local character and history; and (b) establishes or maintains a strong sense of place.

#### *Planning balance*

16. Policies NH/14 and HQ/1 of the Local Plan, which was adopted less than 5 years ago, are broadly consistent with the Framework insofar as they relate to the main issues of the case and I am satisfied that the proposal conflicts with the development plan when taken as a whole.
17. I recognise that the proposed dwelling is not in a conservation area and that the Parish Council supports the scheme. However, this does not remove the need for the development to be of a high quality design or justify the harm identified.
18. The scheme is a suitable windfall site within an existing settlement for a home, which I have given great weight to in accordance with Paragraph 69 of the Framework. It would also constitute an effective & efficient use of under-utilised land at an appropriate dwelling per hectare density as supported by Paragraphs 119, 120, 124 and 125 of the Framework.

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<sup>3</sup> South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, Adopted September 2018, South Cambridgeshire District Council.

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 20 July 2021.

19. Although the scheme incorporates the use of sustainable construction techniques and renewable energy, I found none of the approaches proposed to be novel or unique. In light of this, and for the reasons set out above, I do not consider the scheme to be of an outstanding or innovative design which promotes high levels of sustainability and have not therefore given it significant weight in accordance with Paragraph 134 of the Framework.
20. Turning to the matter of the scheme's impact on the setting of the Limes, I am satisfied that the development would cause less-than substantial harm to its significance as a designated heritage asset. As a consequence, I have weighed this harm against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing optimum viable use, in accordance with Paragraph 202 of the Framework.
21. I also consider there to be harm to the setting of the Hoops, but consider this to be slightly less than that for the Limes on account of its lower significance as a non-designated heritage asset. I have accordingly taken this into account in reaching my decision in accordance with Paragraph 203 of the Framework.
22. In carrying out this balancing exercise, I have also given considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed building in accordance with Section 66 (1) of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
23. I recognise that the scheme would result in a range of public benefits, namely;
  - (a) the provision of a quickly-deliverable additional single dwelling; (b) future occupiers contributing to local shops, services, clubs and community organisations; (c) the occupiers being able to care for their elderly relatives who may reside with them during ill health; (d) the utilisation of sustainable construction techniques and renewable energy to reduce the scheme's carbon footprint; (e) new landscaping and ecological enhancements resulting in improved biodiversity; and (f) local employment during construction. However, it is my view that when considered collectively, these would be of modest value and outweighed by the harm to the significance of the Limes and its setting as a Listed building.
24. Similarly, I am also of the view that the above benefits would be outweighed by the adverse impacts of the scheme on the setting of a non-designated heritage asset (the Hoops) and character and appearance of the area.
25. In view of the above, I conclude that the proposal does not accord with the development plan and that other material considerations do not indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with this.

## **Conclusion**

26. All representations have been taken into account, but no matters, including the scope of possible planning conditions, have been found to outweigh the identified failures, harm and policy conflict. For the reasons above, the appeal should be dismissed.

*Robert Fallon*

INSPECTOR