

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 March 2023

by J Somers BSocSci (Planning) MA (HEC) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/D/23/3315649

168 High Barns, Ely CB7 4RP

- 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 Erika Urboniene against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01259/FUL, dated 11 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 21 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as a proposed single storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the existing building and the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located along High Barns, which forms a number of streets in the locality that contains formally laid out speculative housing which appears to date from the mid-late twentieth century. The local area predominantly contains semi-detached and groups of terraced dwellings which have a symmetry and regimented layout in their placement with a consistent building line and setback with front gardens with a variance between no boundary walls, hedging and low boundary walls. The low nature of front gardens gives a very open aspect where spaces and visual gaps in and around dwellings and to the first floor level in between properties over garages experience glimpses to the tops of trees in rear gardens. These elements make up some of the positive characteristics alongside the large green verge opposite. On my site visit I noticed very similar designs, particular those along High Barns are two storey, main hipped and gabled roof forms with brown concrete tiles. The materials are also largely consistent and comprise of light and darker shades of brown brick with coaxial chimney stacks. These are some of the elements which form part of the qualities that make up the local character and distinctiveness of the area.
4. The appeal site forms one of the end properties of the characteristic groups of terraced properties. In this particular location, there is a strong building line with the front façade of dwellings along High Barns (No.s 170-176) aligning with the gable wall of the appeal site. To the side of the appeal site is a large grassed area which contributes to the positive qualities of the open grass verges which are part of the local distinctiveness of this area.

5. In undertaking extensions and alterations to existing dwellings, the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (LP) Policy ENV1 seeks that development takes into account the surrounding context, and that the location, scale, form, design, materials, colour, edge treatment and structural landscaping will create positive, complementary relationships with existing development. Additionally, LP Policy ENV2 lists a number of design criteria which seeks that development considers location, layout, form, and local distinctiveness, amongst others. These policies are supported by a Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which provides further guidance and advice with regards to appropriate design principles employed in extensions and alterations.
6. Whilst I appreciate the appellant's comments that the proposed scheme is single storey and relatively small, the extension would project past the strong building line which is noted as a positive characteristic of the form and regimented layout of these dwellings. Whilst small, the extension would also erode part of the visual gaps in and around the dwelling, changing the form from an open environment to one which is of built form, which has detrimental harm to the openness of the area which is a positive characteristic.
7. I acknowledge two photographs¹ of dwellings which have been included in the appellant's Statement of Case which seek to demonstrate similar extensions in the locality which have been approved. I am unclear of the circumstances behind each approval, however on my site visit I noticed that the side extension to No. 297, the positioning of the dwellings does not have the same relationship and regimented building line as the appeal site, much of the side extension does appear to be in line with the front façade of the dwellings around the corner from this property. Despite this, the age of the extension does appear to pre-date the LP. Having also viewed No.249, this dwelling whilst located on a corner, does not have the same characteristics of the appeal site in terms of the regimented layout of dwellings, where there is no attempt to meet any setback or building line. Taking these two cases into account, I am not convinced that they represent analogous situations to the appeal site and do not provide justification for the appropriateness of the proposed extension.
8. In conclusion of this matter, the proposed single storey side extension would erode part of the key spaces and gaps in and around the dwelling and its projection would create a poor relationship to the existing buildings within the street scene and be detrimental to the character and appearance of the existing building and the greater locality. The side extension would therefore be contrary to LP Policy ENV1 and ENV2, as described previously.

Other Matters

9. I acknowledge and appreciate the comments from the applicant in their personal statement which accompanies the Statement of Case regarding their personal needs, their specific situation and justifications for the proposed extension which I have treated as a material consideration to this proposal. Having reviewed these personal circumstances, I feel that there may be other ways of accommodating the applicant's needs which may be more compliant with the policies of the development plan. As such the personal circumstances of the applicant in this case do not indicate that the decision should not be made in accordance with the policies of the development plan.

¹ No.s 297 and 249 High Barns

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

J Somers
INSPECTOR