



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2024

by Eleni Randle BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/D/23/3333934

1A Hayfield Avenue, Sawston, Cambridgeshire, CB22 3JZ

- 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 Craig Taylor against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 23/03161/HFUL dated 14 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 30 October 2023.
 - The development proposed is erection of a freestanding carport.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have utilised the Council's description of the development as per the decision notice as I feel it more concisely describes the development.
3. Since the determination of this application the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised in response to the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy consultation on 19 December 2023. The refusal reason generically references the Framework however, it is not considered that this latest revision impacts upon the determination of this appeal given the changes and the main issue before me.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the host dwelling and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a detached, two storey, dwelling of brick and tile construction which is located off Hayfield Avenue. The host property is the first property on Hayfield Avenue, where there is a clear building line, and is located in close proximity to the junction with Churchfield Avenue. At the time of my site visit I noted that there is close boarded fencing to the appeal site boundary facing the road junction, however, the site is visually prominent not only as a result of its location adjacent to the road junction but also as a result of it facing onto a green open space which means that the host dwelling is widely visible within the immediate public domain as well as from neighbouring streets.
6. The proposal seeks to erect a freestanding carport to the front of the host dwelling. This would not impact upon the existing two off road parking spaces available to the front of the host dwelling. The proposal would be in the region

of 2.31 metres, at its highest point, with a length of approximately 7.22 metres and width of 5.71 metres. The proposed materials would be a combination of polycarbonate and wood plastic composite. The roof material would be semi-transparent polycarbonate.

7. At the time of my site visit I noted that there are some structures within the vicinity, akin to outbuildings or garaging, particularly along Churchfield Avenue which I drove along to access the site. Such examples are, however, typically to the side of their host dwelling and are of more modest scale with there being no examples of similar protrusions out and up to the highway boundary at the front elevation of the host property. I note a structure at 58 Churchfield Avenue which is to the front of the property, but this is significantly smaller in scale, occupies a small part of the host property's frontage with it being a subservient addition to the semi-detached bungalow in question.
8. The appeal proposal before me would result in a substantial structure which would protrude forward of the building line along Hayfield Avenue as a result of construction extending up to the appeal site boundary, adjacent to the public highway, occupying much of the frontage of the host dwelling. A development of this scale, in this location, would be at odds with the character of the area where such features, where found, are generally smaller in scale and do not protrude out to the highway boundary. Due to the location of the host dwelling the proposal's impact would be exacerbated as it would be highly visible within the immediate area as well as within longer views through the estate and surrounding area. The proposal would be a visually dominant feature within the street scene.
9. In addition, I find that the proposed materials would also be uncharacteristic and contribute to the visual contrast when taking into account the material palette typically found within the surrounding area and on the host dwelling. I find that the proposal would, overall, result in an alien feature which would detract from general views of the host dwelling itself. As a result of scale, bulk, massing and design I find that the proposal would cause harm to the wider character and appearance of the area and the host dwelling.
10. I note the appellant's comments submitted as part of this appeal, however, based upon the viewpoints which I saw at the time of my site visit, I find that the proposal would be fully visible from Churchfield Avenue particularly in views from the south. I do not find that the proposal's roof would blend into the lines of the house and, I find that the proposed materials, and overall scale and design, would be entirely at odds with the existing characteristics of the host dwelling and surrounding area. It is acknowledged that the carport's design is only large enough to cover an area where cars are parked, however, the massing of the proposal would still not be in line with the houses in the area as a result of protrusion forward of the building line and would be an uncharacteristic feature within the surrounding area.
11. The appellant states that many other neighbours in the area do have carports and that some are of a similar size to that which is proposed, albeit they are set back further from the pavement due to the layout of their properties. Whilst these comments are noted I did not, at the time of my site visit, see examples of carports which could be said to be a similar size to that which is before me regardless of build quality as a comparison. The appellant has not provided evidence as to the other examples referred to within their statement.

12. The proposals would be contrary South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (LP) Policy HQ/1 which requires that all new developments must preserve or enhance the character of the local urban area and be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, and materials in relation to the surrounding area. The proposal would also be contrary to the South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2010 (SPD) which seeks to ensure that garages, where appropriate, merge into their surroundings to avoid such development being generally prominent within the street scape.
13. The proposal would fail to preserve or enhance features which are specifically noted within the Sawston Village Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2020. This highlights the area, within which the appeal site stands, as a housing area with linear character and permeable street structure with long views through estates. The proposal would also be contrary to the overarching objectives of Section 12 of the Framework which highlights that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what planning, and development should achieve with good design being a key aspect of sustainable development.
14. I note the appellant's comments regarding his view that references to the relevant LP, SPD documents and the Framework are largely irrelevant when it comes to the specific case of adding a carport to the host dwelling. The LP Policy, and overarching objectives of SPD and The Framework, are, however, clear in their intention to achieve high quality design which is appropriate to the setting of the proposed development with the intention that it should be in keeping with its surroundings. As I have outlined, within this decision letter, the proposal would be uncharacteristic in that there are no examples of similar forms of development within the vicinity which, combined with design, materials and high visibility, would mean that the proposal is inappropriate in terms of character and appearance of the surrounding area and the host dwelling.

Other Matters

15. Impact to property values is not a material planning consideration and, unfortunately, professional design work by an architect does not necessarily automatically equate to appropriate design or one which could be considered to be appropriate taking into account the surroundings in this case.
16. I note the appellant's comments regarding engagement within a pre-application call with the Council as well as general comments regarding a lack of engagement during the application process itself. The handling of the application is not a matter which is within the scope of this appeal and the appeal is not accompanied by an application for costs by the appellant. Notwithstanding this, I have no evidence to suggest that there has been unreasonable behaviour and pre-application advice is, nonetheless, offered without prejudice to the determination of an application. It is normal practice for officers, at all levels, to collaborate with and be overseen by a development control manager who ultimately is responsible for signing off the decision and whose name is usually the authorised signatory upon decision notices.
17. Ultimately, I have no evidence to suggest that the planning officer in question has acted in an unprofessional manner and have no evidence that the Council has acted unreasonably in the issuing of a decision which was supported by a

delegated report which fully sets out the reasoning for the Council's decision in this case. It is not within the scope of this appeal to consider whether further amendments, be that to design (removal of walls) or materials would result in a more favourable outcome – I have, and can, only determine the appeal proposal as is submitted before me and which has been considered by the Council.

18. I note that the appellant is happy to utilise a different material, however, in this case I do not find that a change of materials would overcome the general concerns which I have found in relation to the overall scale, design, and massing and location forward of the building line in a visually prominent location as I have already outlined. Overall, whilst I note the appellant's comments, I have considered the case upon its own merits, utilising my own judgement, and have found the proposal to be unacceptable for the reasons I have outlined taking into account the relevant policies within the Local Plan, the guidance within the relevant SPDs and the Framework as a material consideration.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons outlined above, and taking account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR