



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2024

by E Catcheside BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/23/3330037

22 School Lane, Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire CB21 5BH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Miss and Mrs S and D Claydon and Payne against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02662/FUL.
 - The development proposed is subdivision of an existing residential site to allow for the construction of a new dwelling following the demolition of an existing side extension and allowing for single storey front and rear additions to the existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The decision notice refers to the proposed dwelling as a detached property. However, the submitted plans show the dwelling would be attached to the host property at first floor and roof levels. I have considered the appeal on this basis.
3. The appeal site lies within the setting of the Fulbourn Conservation Area (CA). No statutory protection for the setting of a CA is present under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. However, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting its setting, shall be taken into account when assessing proposals. I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, taking account of the effect on the CA through development within its setting.

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies on the corner of School Lane and St Vigor's Road, and it comprises a semi-detached dwelling with wraparound garden. The boundary of the Fulbourn CA lies on the other side of School Lane and St Vigor's Road, in close proximity to the appeal site. The significance of the CA is derived, in part, from its rich stock of historic buildings, streets, and spaces that reveal the evolution of the village over time.

6. The host property forms the end building in a row of tight-knit semi-detached and terraced dwellings. Along with the wide grass verge on the opposite side of St Vigor's Road, the space to the side of the host building, particularly at first floor level, creates a sense of openness that is distinctive to this prominent street corner.
7. The open character at this junction signals the transition between the more modern development on this part of School Lane and the looser grain traditional buildings in the CA. Moreover, the wide side space and absence of two-storey buildings on the appeal site allows for views between School Lane and St Vigor's Road, and into the CA beyond, to be gained over the site. Therefore, the openness of the site makes a positive contribution to the significance of the CA by enabling its historic buildings and roofscape to be experienced from this part of School Lane.
8. The proposed dwelling would replace an existing single-storey extension with a wider, two-storey building. Given the host property is semi-detached, the additional dwelling would create a short terrace of three properties. This would not be unusual in the context of this part of School Lane, given the existing range of properties on the street. The new building would also be of a similar scale and form to nearby dwellings, and it would reflect prevailing architectural styles and materials. Moreover, I acknowledge that the submitted plans show the development would provide sufficient outdoor amenity space, as well as on-plot parking and facilities for the storage of bicycles and refuse.
9. However, whilst some side space would be retained, the proposed dwelling would occupy the majority of the plot width and it would introduce significant additional bulk, mass, and height to part of the site that is currently devoid of two-storey buildings. Moreover, whilst the proposed dwelling would be sited within the existing boundaries of No 22, it would nonetheless erode the open character of this prominent corner.
10. Due to its height, width and siting, along with the alignment of the two streets, the proposed dwelling would be unduly prominent in views from School Lane and St Vigor's Road. It would also restrict views that can currently be gained over the appeal site between School Lane and St Vigor's Road and into the CA beyond. Consequently, the development would reduce the ability of passers-by to observe the historical buildings and roofscape within the CA, and to experience the relationship between this part of Fulbourn and the historic core of the village. Therefore, the proposed development would fail to preserve the setting of the CA, and there would be harm caused to the significance of the CA through development within its setting.
11. I do not have definitive evidence before me to establish the average net density in the area around the appeal site. However, as a proposal for a single dwelling, there would be very little effect on the average net density of this established residential area. Nevertheless, as identified above, the proposal would be unacceptable for other reasons.
12. My attention has been drawn to other dwellings in the local area that have been constructed on relatively small sites including on Holmans Close, St Vigor's Road, and Pettit's Close. I am also mindful of existing extensions to dwellings on School Lane, some of which have altered the relationship between buildings on the street. I do not have sufficient evidence before me to be certain of the full circumstances that led to these developments becoming

established. However, none of the examples cited are comparable to the appeal site insofar as it occupies a prominent and open corner plot, adjacent to the CA.

13. The level of harm that would be caused to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial, and I have no reason to disagree with the view of the Council's Conservation Officer that the harm would be at the lower end of the scale. However, the Framework states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset, irrespective of the level of harm. Paragraph 208 of the Framework requires the less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
14. The development would provide an additional dwelling that would contribute towards the national objective to significantly boost the supply of homes. Given its modest size it would contribute to the delivery of a mix of housing types and could be suitable as a starter home or for a small family. It is also reasonably likely that the dwelling would be more affordable than other, larger properties in the locality and it could therefore appeal to those on lower incomes.
15. The proposed alterations to the existing property could also help to improve the quality of the existing housing stock. Some further benefit would arise through the removal of the existing single-storey extension which, as a flat-roofed structure, is at odds with the design of the buildings around it.
16. However, the public benefits arising from the delivery of one open-market dwelling and the alterations to the host property would be modest. Consequently, the cumulative weight of the benefits would be moderate and would not be sufficient to outweigh the great weight that the conservation of a designated heritage asset carries. The proposal therefore fails to accord with the historic environment protection policies of the Framework.
17. I conclude that the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area; and through development within its setting, would cause harm to the significance of the CA as a designated heritage asset. There would, therefore, be conflict with Policy H/16 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (Adopted September 2018) (LP) insofar as it seeks to ensure the development of residential gardens would not cause significant harm to the character of the local area and CA. There would also be conflict with Policy HQ/1 of the LP, and the Framework, insofar as they expect development to be of high-quality design that preserves or enhances the character of the area and important historic assets and their settings. Further conflict would arise with Policy NH/14 of the LP, which supports proposals that sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, as appropriate to their significance and in accordance with the Framework.
18. However, there would be no conflict with Policy H/8 of the LP, which states that the net density on a site may vary from an average 30 dwellings per hectare, where justified by the character of the locality, the scale of the development, or other local circumstances.

Other Matters

19. No harm has been identified in respect of the standard of the proposed accommodation and amenity space, and the Council is satisfied that the proposal would safeguard the living conditions of neighbours including in terms

of light and outlook. I have no reason to take a different view on these matters. The absence of harm weighs neither for nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

20. Whilst I have not found harm in relation to the effect of the proposal on average net housing density, there would nonetheless be harm caused to the character and appearance of the area. There would also be harm caused to the significance of the CA through development within its setting, which would not be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme.
21. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

E Catcheside

INSPECTOR