
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 July 2024

by A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/W/24/3338964

47 Histon Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB4 3JD

- 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 Mr Hassan against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00277/FUL.
 - The development proposed is Two Bed Dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council's second and third reasons for refusal relate to the provision of information within the application. Given my conclusion on the first refusal reason it is not necessary to make a determination on these matters.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the street-scene and the Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is the rear part of a garden associated with the host property, 47 Histon Road, a narrow rectangle of land that flanks Canterbury Street on its southern side and opens onto North Street and the extension of Canterbury Street at its western end. The site lies within the Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area (CVRCA) which has a mix of development patterns that reflect the area's development, the area around the appeal site being a tight arrangement of terrace streets of nineteenth-century origin. There are subtle differences in design and detail within a development pattern which is modulated by built insertions from more recent times, gaps in frontage or the end/flank walls of terrace blocks with glimpses over their associated gardens, presenting a varied street scene within a small area.
5. Immediate surroundings of the site include a block of 4 terraced houses on Canterbury Street opposite the site that have a modest walled setback from the pavement whereas in the extension of that street beyond North Street, similar two storey houses sit at the back of pavement. Also, 11 North Street (No.11) is a very recently constructed two-storey dwelling which the proposal would adjoin, and beyond that, to the north, a range of garages or similar

structures that appear to serve dwellings fronting Histon Road. Near the northern end of North Street there is an established group of infill dwellings from the late twentieth-century, and, at No.37, a contemporary design which No.11 appears to mimic.

6. The appeal site, which the Council refer to as a 'corner plot' differs from these examples in one significant respect which is that unlike the examples referred to, the site is has a long boundary occupying much of the block depth along the north side of Canterbury Street such that what is proposed would be a prominent feature in the street scene and CVRCA- both along Canterbury Street and at its junction with North Street. In that regard considerable design skill, involving more attention to detailing than is apparent in the submission, would be required to positively address, in the contemporary manner proposed, the relationship between any proposal and No.11, which is clearly a successful insertion into the street scene, but also engage with the corner plot setting and the adjoining length of Canterbury Street.
7. The appellant has provided information on previous submissions expressing frustration at the Council's feedback which is purported to have been followed. Whilst it is evident the applicant has sought to adopt advice given, and it is not before me to address the approach taken by either party, I note the submitted, but brief, Design and Access Statement makes a number of assertions but does not attempt to explain how the design evolved which would be usual practice for such a document. Such content would be by way of justification for the proposal as submitted but primarily as a tool for design development within the complexities of small-scale urban design where, as here, successful outcomes typically require coherent detailed responses to careful observation of setting and character.
8. It is not disputed that the appeal site is a suitable location for a dwelling of appropriate design. So, turning to the design itself, my observations are that the proposal would sit uncomfortably against the bold and distinct form adopted in the design of No.11 by virtue of its clashing lesser pitch of roof slope and ridge height. Whilst the lower ridge height might be a natural consequence of the difference in plot width, the appeal site being markedly narrower than No.11, the inclusion of a symmetrical but lower-pitched roof would result in an upper storey which appears squashed down upon the ground floor structure, a 'poor neighbour' of No.11 rather than a freestanding design of independent origin. Whilst this may have come about in response to the Council's suggestions¹ it is the appellant's design decision to pursue a symmetrical pitched roof to enclose an upper level of accommodation and to introduce a material break at the floor level (rather than below it) which has created this effect when clearly other options for the roof profile and alignment of changes in materials would be available.
9. A further consideration is the effect of the proposal on the street scene and neighbouring users. I note the Councils concern at to a 'hard edge' due to the two-storey height. Whilst some change in the street scene would not be unacceptable, what is proposed does not acknowledge the boundary/flank wall is also a prominent street frontage; the attempts of the appellant to retain some greening opportunities are significant but, given the constraints on site width, it is not clear how such planting would be viable in the long term.

¹ The appellant has provided Council emails.

10. Overall I conclude that the proposal, as designed, would not respond adequately to the challenges and opportunities presented by the site and would both fail to preserve or enhance the CVRCA and also fail to accord with Policies 55, 57 and 61 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 which seek that new development should respond positively to context and local character and protect heritage assets from harm; thereby being in conflict with the development plan as a whole. In reaching this conclusion I have addressed the general duty set out in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, consequently, for the reasons given and taking all matters raised into account, this appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR