
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 September 2024

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 02 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/W/23/3329003

21 Anchor Lane, Lakenheath IP27 9DP

- 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 Andrew Rumsey, RS Lakenheath Ltd against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref DC/22/0849/FUL, dated 12 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 12 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on the Lakenheath Conservation Area (CA) and nearby trees.

Reasons

3. The proposal is for the lengthways subdivision of a plot newly developed with a two-storey detached house (No 21) and the construction of an additional one and a half storey dwelling with integral garage. The new plot would comprise about half the existing rear garden and the site of a double garage built for the existing house. No 21 would be served by an additional single garage built in front of the new dwelling.
4. The site fronts onto Anchor Lane, an attractive narrow lane mostly without footways which runs in a loop from the High Street and forms part of the Lakenheath CA. The lane is lined by a variety of buildings of different periods, styles and materials, including older flint and painted brick cottages with pantiled roofs (No 11/13 is listed and the others are noted as buildings of local importance in the CA appraisal) but also some sympathetic modern brick and flint houses. The older cottages generally front directly onto the lane, whilst the later are set back to varying degrees, No 10 the most behind a small lawn which lies adjacent to the side lawn of No 12.
5. The newly built brick/flint and pantile two storey detached house No 21 lies at the north-western corner of the lane where it makes a 90° turn; on either side lie buildings of local importance. The existing plot is quite deep, running down to the Cut-Off Channel, and wide, leaving room for a spacious driveway to the side of the house, curving round a retained Ash tree to the double garage set

back behind. The existing scheme thus retains a pleasing view towards the countryside between Nos 21 and 23 around the corner, seen both by those rounding the corner and those walking down from the High Street. The earlier overgrown nature of the site is not now relevant.

6. Contrary to the prevailing character of frontage building along the lane, the proposed dwelling would be set well back in its plot, behind the rear elevation of the new dwelling No 21 and the buildings of the adjacent property No 19. The purposeful reduction in height of the rear wing of No 21 to single storey to reflect the reducing built form behind adjacent buildings would be contradicted by the presence of the new dwelling behind. In addition, as demonstrated by the Anchor Lane Perspective, the dwelling, even with its lower height, and the single garage would introduce further built form that would significantly restrict the current view out from the lane and the CA towards the rural surroundings of the village, adversely affecting their character and appearance.
7. The severance of the plot would also lead to a restricted rear garden size for No 21, significantly smaller than the spacious rear gardens of the adjacent properties Nos 11/12 – 23, and an unduly small and short rear garden behind the extra property, out of character with those in the vicinity.
8. The Council argue that there is insufficient information to assess the impact of the proposal on adjacent trees although the position is in fact clear. One tree, a good-sized Ash on the side boundary behind the double garage, would be lost to accommodate the new dwelling. Oddly, this is not included in the Tree Report from L Pooley and there appears to be no specific objection to its loss from the Council. On the other hand concerns about the prominent Ash to the front (T3) seem misplaced as the driveway to the existing garage, which would be retained, has already been laid around it as part of the approved scheme. Any further impact from the proposed single garage would be negligible. The only other trees, a pair of Ash (T1/T2) on the side boundary to the rear lie well behind the proposed dwelling with the patio likely to intrude only slightly into the root protection area. Overall, the three trees T1-T3 could be protected by suitable conditions.
9. However, the loss of the Ash tree to the rear of the double garage would add to the harm caused by the scheme. This tree is easily seen from Anchor Lane and even if poor quality contributes to the verdant view that would be lost should the scheme proceed.
10. It is appreciated that a large mixed-use scheme including 28 dwellings has recently been approved off Dumpling Bridge Lane to the north of the site and that this will affect the view from the corner of Anchor Lane towards the rural area to the north-west. However, this previously developed site is allocated for development and does not justify the harm that would arise here.
11. For these reasons the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area, would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Lakenheath CA and would involve the loss of an Ash tree which makes a contribution to the visual amenity of the area. This would conflict with Policies CS3 and CS5 of the Forest Heath Core Strategy 2010 and Policies DM2, DM13, DM17 and DM22 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015. These seek to protect and reinforce the local distinctiveness of the landscape and historic environment, to preserve or enhance the CA, including views into and out of the CA, ensure development is

of a scale and form which respects the area's character and ensure design is based on an analysis of existing buildings, landscape and topography. The proposal would also conflict with the legislative duty to preserve the character and appearance of the CA.

Conclusion

12. The proposal would provide an additional four-bedroom family dwelling which would make a useful contribution to local housing needs and have economic and social benefits for the village. However, these benefits are outweighed by the harm that would result to the character and appearance of the area and the preservation of the character and appearance of the Lakenheath CA.
13. Having regard to the above the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR