

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 October 2024

by **Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 October 2024

Appeal Ref. APP/Q0505/D/24/3348386
107 Hemingford Road, Cambridge CB1 3BY

- 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 Alison Hoare against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application ref. is 24/01749/HFUL.
 - The development proposed is: Raising ridge and widening of existing loft extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for raising ridge and widening of existing loft extension at 107 Hemingford Road, Cambridge CB1 3BY in accordance with the terms of the application, ref. 24/01749/HFUL, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans numbered/titled: 2313-01A Location and Site Plan; 2313-02A Floor Plans; 2313-03A Existing Elevations and Sections; and 2313-04A Proposed Elevations and Sections.

Preliminary matters

2. The description of the proposal in the heading and decision above is taken from the application form. The proposal would include raising the ridge of the dwelling and widening an existing dormer window as noted in the Council's description.
3. Despite being presented with maps in the Council's questionnaire purporting to show 107 Hemingford Road falling within the Central Conservation Area, my understanding from the other material before me is that the appeal site is situated within the Mill Road Conservation Area (MRCA).
4. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (s72 of the Act) requires that when assessing proposals for new development within a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Main issue

5. The main issue is the extent to which the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the MRCA.

Reasons

6. The MRCA encompasses Hemingford Road which is a residential and straight street. No. 107 is a 2 storey mid-terrace dwelling with a converted loft.
7. Hemingford Road typifies this part of the MRCA's special character and significance as a designated heritage asset which stem from, amongst other things, its late Victorian grid pattern of streets and predominantly 2-storey terraced housing located on or very close to the back of the footways.
8. The appeal dwelling is finished with gault brickwork with red brick dressings and slates with attractive 3-hole crested roof ridge tiles and, like the neighbouring houses, makes a positive contribution to the MRCA's character and appearance.
9. The major part of the proposal would see the existing substantial, flat-roofed, rear dormer slightly widened to reach the boundary with no. 105, clad in zinc to match the rear full-width dormer at no. 109 and covered across the top with high-performance insulation to a depth of about 170mm. The Council does not object to the proposal insofar as it relates to these changes to the rear dormer as viewed from the rear. I do not take a contrary view, noting the rear roof is not seen from the street or from any other obvious and near public vantage points and the sizeable rear dormers at several dwellings immediately to the north of the appeal property.
10. In order to accommodate the thicker flat roof over the rear dormer as enlarged and insulated, there would be a minor increase in the height of the roof ridge. This would be achieved by offsetting the new ridge 234mm behind the line of the existing roof ridge and the adjacent roof ridges of nos 105 and 109. The Council stated that the raised ridge would adversely affect the character and significance of the setting of the terraced houses, introducing a discordant feature and therefore failing to preserve the character and appearance of the MRCA.
11. Appendix E: Roof Extensions Design Guide (REDG) of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 (LP), which post-dates the Mill Road Area Conservation Area Appraisal, assists in the design of roof extensions and their impact on the roof. It says that roof extensions that raise the height of the ridge will normally not be supported unless the street already lacks uniform roof heights or the ridge of the roof is not visible from the street.
12. The terrace containing no. 107 runs between nos 79 and 113. As the appellant correctly points out, this terrace contains houses (nos 79, 87 and 113) which have been modified with raised roof ridges and a run of houses starting at no. 101 and moving southwards with a raised front roof profile and higher eaves line. Moreover, the host terrace is bookended by other properties that display changes in their roof ridges, most notably at nos 67 and 75, 77 to the south and nos 115 to 129 to the north. Even though only no. 67 is part of a terrace, it and those other properties add to the impression that the street already lacks uniform roof heights. I consider that the appeal scheme would be in keeping with the requirements of the REDG.
13. The scheme is not poorly designed. The resulting front of the house would remain attractive in itself and barely change in terms of its appearance. The offset ridge

would minimise the impact on the front roof plane. The single small front roof light would be retained and not enlarged. The new ridge would have crested tiles. To the extent that there would be an altered or new roof profile, it would be sympathetic to the existing building and surrounding area given the existing variation in the ridge lines. There would only be a marginal increase in the dwelling's ridge height which I estimate would be more akin to the subtle changes that have occurred at nos 79 and 87, which are only really revealed upon very close examination from street level, rather than the more noticeable stepped roof at no. 113. The raised ridge would therefore have extremely limited prominence in the public domain. The substantial brick chimneys which span across the party walls and the larger front roof lights at nos 109, 111 and 113 would continue to first draw the eye of observers looking at the roofscape.

14. Drawing these threads together, the raised ridge and the scheme as a whole would not harm the character and appearance of the dwelling, the host terrace or the Hemingford Road street scene. By exhibiting a site-specific and sensitive design quality, being sufficiently complementary and sympathetic to the parent building, being respectful of the local context, the street scene and the surroundings in general, the appeal scheme would preserve the significance, character and appearance of the MRCA.
15. I find on the main issue that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the MRCA. It would respect the aims of s72 of the Act and LP Policies 55, 58 and 61. These policies seek to ensure development responds positively to its context, any alteration or extension is carefully designed and development preserves or enhances the significance of Cambridge's heritage assets, including conservation areas. The scheme accords with the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as it relates to achieving well-designed and beautiful places and conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Other matters

16. I did not find harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset (the MRCA) so there is no requirement to weigh up the public benefits of the proposal as such.
17. The scheme seeks to improve the thermal performance of the property. This would help to reduce carbon emissions from heating and cooling. In the longer term, the appellant points out that this may facilitate the future installation of a heating system based on renewable energy.
18. It would be wrong to attach only minimal weight to this aspect of the scheme just because only a single building is involved. That approach could be repeated too often and ignoring the positive cumulative environmental impact of many householders adapting existing dwellings would not sit well with Cambridge's declared Climate Emergency. The National Planning Policy Framework advises that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic. This matter therefore adds further weight to my decision to allow the appeal.

Conditions

19. The Council, in its questionnaire, suggests 3 planning conditions should be imposed in the event of the appeal being allowed. In addition to a condition setting a time limit for the commencement of development, a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant approved drawings is necessary as this provides certainty. I have not imposed the Council's other suggested condition which would stipulate the use of matching materials as this would prevent the use of zinc cladding on the rear dormer which the Council said, quite correctly in my view, would harmonize with neighbouring properties. The materials of construction are sufficiently well detailed on the approved plans such that no separate condition on materials is required.

Conclusion

20. For these reasons and having regard to all other matters raised and the lack of objections from local residents, I conclude that this appeal should succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR