



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2024

by R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D0515/W/24/3346416

37 High Causeway, Whittlesey PE7 1AN

- 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 Jonathan Fowler against the decision of Fenland District Council.
 - The application Ref is F/YR23/0071/F.
 - The development proposed is erection of new dwelling to rear of No.37 High Causeway.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the streetscene, and on the setting of the Whittlesey Conservation area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises an area of enclosed yard adjoining No.37 High Causeway (No.37), which itself returns the corner to Syers Lane and is partly in residential, and partly in retail use. No.37 is sited at the back edge of the pavement of High Causeway and it is proposed to continue this building line, and construct a new two-storey dwelling which would project around 5.1m from its existing flank gable.
4. On its High Causeway, Syers Lane corner, No.37 has a hipped roof and the proposed dwelling has been designed such that a hipped roof form would continue with an eaves and ridge height matching its host. On the front elevation, the proposed dwelling would have a front door and single (aligned) window at ground and first floor. To one side, it would also accommodate a narrow undercroft passageway (of around 900mm) which would provide access to the rear (retained) yard. It is understood that this yard would provide a communal amenity area (and bin store) for No.37's existing flats, and the proposed ground floor plan for the new dwelling shows bifold doors onto this area.
5. The width of the front elevation of the proposed new dwelling is very narrow (not much more than 4m, excluding the passageway) and I concur with the Council that it appears 'shoehorned' onto a constrained plot. The undercroft passageway design is indicative of this, failing to represent good design. The

appellant has drawn my attention to other buildings in the surrounding area which have an undercroft and this includes No.48 High Causeway which is broadly opposite the appeal site. This undercroft is wide (enclosed by double gates), providing access to No.48 (a to d) High Causeway to the rear, and whilst I accept it forms part of the existing streetscene I do not find it contributes positively to it. I observed that the examples of two further properties on Syers Lane which benefit from an undercroft are more successful in design because they form part of a wider and balanced building frontage, rather than appearing to reflect the constraints of a site. I do not, therefore, find them directly comparable to the appeal proposal before me, nor provide particular justification for it.

6. I observed on my site visit that the fenestration details – notably location, design and materials of windows and doors – varies considerably on properties on either side of High Causeway. I note that the design and location of the proposed windows would not reflect the existing windows of No.37 (which on site do not reflect the Street Scene drawing submitted with the planning application), but given the variety I describe, I do not find this in itself would cause particular harm to the host property or wider streetscene.
7. Adjacent the northern boundary of the appeal site is an access drive to No.39 High Causeway, which is set back from the road. To the north of this access drive is the boundary of the Whittlesey Conservation Area (the CA), which includes the historic town centre, but also a separate residential area around Gracious Street, Delph Street and Claygate. I have a statutory duty by virtue of Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a CA.
8. The significance of the CA is derived, in part, from a strong historic streetscene of brick-built mid to late C19th properties and I observed this both looking north and south along High Causeway as the road gently curves. The appeal site (and adjoining access road) provide an open aspect or relief in built form which I observed contributed to the setting of the row of four cottages on the west side of High Causeway, which are within the CA. As already described, the constrained nature of the appeal site, means the proposed new dwelling would appear 'shoehorned,' very narrow and the undercroft passageway would appear contrived rather than of good design. Consequently, I find it would detract from the streetscene, and the setting of these cottages.
9. I therefore conclude on the main issue that the proposals would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host property, the streetscene and wider Whittlesey Conservation Area. It would conflict with policies LP16 and LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework because it would fail to deliver a high quality environment which protects and enhances heritage assets, or makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and character of an area.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

R. Jones

INSPECTOR