



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2025

by **S Simms BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/D/24/3353088

73 The Highway, Great Staughton, St. Neots PE19 5DA

- 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 and Mrs A Smith against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00680/HHFUL.
 - The development proposed is a garage, new boundary wall and oil tank.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The decision notice cited Section 12 of the December 2023 version of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework was amended in December 2024, but the amendments are not material in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

4. The site comprises a two-storey detached house with white render walls and tile roof fronting the main road through Great Staughton, the Conservation Area (CA) of which begins about 30m further to the east. A grade II listed building is located about 20m away diagonally across the road to the north-west.
5. The front garden is mostly surfaced in blockwork. A raised bed along the frontage contains a conifer hedge about 5m in height alongside brick piers for a double gate of about 3.5m width and 2m height. At the other end of the hedge are further brick piers with a close boarded fence in between, behind which is a plastic oil tank atop a raised platform. There is no vehicular access to the rear garden.
6. A variety of buildings of different styles and relationships are found along the main road. Some buildings in the centre of the village are sited at the back of the pavement, but most are set behind front gardens with low walls or hedges. A high conifer hedge two properties away and a taller wall with wooden panels at the neighbouring property are exceptions. Where the main road turns on to Green Lane, a taller wall bounds the side of a garden and the end of a road. As such, this

is both on a different street and in a different built relationship. There are no examples of detached garages or oil tanks in front gardens nearby.

7. The proposal would remove the hedge to the frontage and introduce a brick wall of 1875mm height, with a 2320mm-high garage and a replacement oil tank behind. The hedge at its current height is not ideal, but there is another nearby and both present soft landscape to the road, so its loss would be harmful unless replaced by a boundary treatment more characteristic of the locality.
8. Because there is only one front garden wall of similar height on the main road, the proposed wall would be uncharacteristic of its surroundings. Furthermore, as that wall is next to the site, albeit across an access, it would extend the length of this uncharacteristic treatment. The gates, being of similar height, would do little to ameliorate this effect, which would harm the appearance of this end of the village.
9. The proposed garage would be taller than the wall and, abutting it, read as part of the same structure from the road. This would have the effect of increasing the height of the wall, whilst also suggesting a feature uncharacteristic of front gardens in the area. The proposed oil tank would be similarly uncharacteristic.
10. Therefore, the development conflicts with Huntingdonshire Local Plan (HLP) Policy LP11, which requires proposals inspired by characteristics of their surroundings and relevant design guidance, and Policy LP12, which requires an understanding of context and attractive frontages that avoid incongruous elements.
11. The Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document section on building form recommends adhering to a building line determined by the character for that street and, on boundary treatments, notes that brick walls can dominate if used too much and advises using hedgerows to soften or replace them. The garage and wall would run contrary to this design guidance in those regards.

Other Matters

12. Whilst the front garden is used for parking and there is no vehicular access to the rear garden, this was a previous design choice and is not, of itself, a reason to allow harmful development. Similarly, the effect of the proposal on the setting of heritage assets does not dictate its effect on the character and appearance of the locality generally. Therefore, I attach limited weight to these factors.

Conclusion

13. I conclude that the height of the wall, its length in conjunction with its neighbour, and the height and siting of the garage and oil tank would harm the character and appearance of the locality, contrary to HLP Policies LP11 and LP12. This is not outweighed by other factors and, consequently, the appeal is dismissed.

S Simms

INSPECTOR