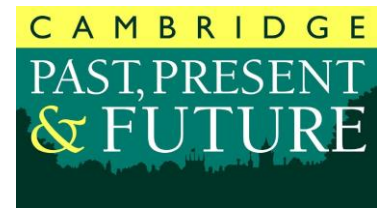


Greater Cambridge Share Planning Service



By Online Planning Register

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25/10/2022

Dear Adam

Response to 22/03895/HFUL & 22/04362/LBC One-and-a half storey extensions to east of existing cottage, and demolition of two-storey annexe, Kings Cottage 7 High Street Grantchester

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

Cambridge Past Present & Future welcomes the proposal to renovate King's Cottage. However, on balance we feel that the plans for the rest of the development is contrary to Policy NH/14 as they will not 'preserve or enhance' the character of the Grantchester Conservation Area. Consequently, we OBJECT to the proposal in its current form. Our concerns are:

- 1) The extent of new build that is being introduced into a central part of the Conservation Area which will inevitably change its character to a very considerable extent;
- 2) The extent to which the proposals challenge notions of 'subservience' to the heritage asset and compromise its 'integrity';
- 3) The extent to which the proposals for the street frontage introduce an in appropriately formal structure to the landscaping detracting from its charm and permeability.
- 4) The inadequate and seemingly incomplete documentation provided with the proposal making it difficult to come to a full appreciation of the proposal's case.

Policy NH/14 requires the development to sustain and enhance the significance, including the setting, of the listed building and the conservation area.

The Heritage Statement

The Heritage Statement is very brief. We consider that it does not provide sufficient evidence and analysis to understand the significance of the listed building and the conservation area and the impact this development will have on them.

The Design, Access and Heritage (DAH) Statement claims that a copy of “the listing description (for King’s Cottage) and its setting amongst other listed buildings is attached in Appendix 1”. We could not locate this Appendix and, as a result, are unable to assess it: it does not appear to be attached to the DAH (where one would expect to find it) nor could we locate it anywhere else on the planning website.

For the reasons set out below, we disagree with the conclusion of the Heritage Statement that the proposal will have a minimal impact on the significance of the heritage asset.

Character of the Conservation Area

King’s Cottage is a charming Grade 2 listed mid-17th and 18th century building. It occupies a central position at the heart of the Grantchester Conservation Area. It is immediately opposite two other listed Grade 2 buildings: the Reading Room/Village Hall and Wright’s Row, a group of thatched cottages. In addition, its immediate neighbours on the same side of the street are the Victorian school on one side and a former village shop on the other. Both are located on sizeable plots. This is, in short, an historic and characterful part of the Conservation Area.

We agree with the claim that King’s Cottage needs updating and that refurbishment to ‘bring the building closer to modern standards’ would be beneficial. However, we do not consider it appropriate to increase the size of the cottage’s footprint so very substantially and at the same time demolish a perfectly serviceable two-bedroom house (No. 7A) which could readily be updated.

The Proposed Plans show what are essentially two large extensions. The one directly attached to King’s Cottage (which we term the First Extension) is a little longer than the cottage’s current ground floor footprint and roughly the same width as the original building. North of this First Extension is another one (which we term the Second Extension), joined to the first by a long glass atrium; this is also substantial, albeit not quite on the scale of the First Extension.

In combination the plans show that it is proposed to more than double the footprint of the existing cottage. What is effectively being built to replace No.7A is a new (and much enlarged) family house with a Grade 2 listed building attached to one side. This is especially obvious in the drawings of the East and North elevation.

We do not consider that this part of the Conservation Area can support an intervention on this scale. The newness of the new build and its sheer size will inevitably dominate the street scene to its detriment.

In this connection we note that the proposal for new build runs right up to the eastern boundary crowding the space available still further and breaking the pattern on this side of the street of there being reasonable gaps between properties.

Principles of ‘subservience’ and ‘integrity’

The planning authority's Listed Building SPD (2009) indicates that new additions to heritage assets should be 'subservient' to the main building and respect their 'integrity'. It states that an extension should be set back from the listed building to create a visual separation. The design, bulk and massing of a new building within the setting of the listed buildings should be subservient to the listed building.

We do not consider that the size of the two proposed extensions is subservient to the original dwelling. They will dwarf the heritage asset. The First Extension attached to the cottage will dominate and change the view from the High Street – the part that will be visible is almost as long as the main core part of the heritage asset.

The concept of 'subservience' is again challenged by the positioning and massing of the new build. Paragraph 4.13 of the SPD states that the form of any extension should minimize the amount of historic fabric that will be covered up as a result. As the drawing of the North elevation shows, more than half of the rear of the cottage will be obscured by the First Extension.

An approach frequently adopted by architects to preserve the integrity of heritage assets is to insert a connecting section between old and new builds so that the new build can be seen to be freestanding; these connecting sections are often made of glass and frequently serve as hallways. This approach has not been used here. We are concerned that the link between the old and new building is provided by a 'glass slot connection' to the heritage asset (no.19 on the ground floor plan). This will be created by knocking down a back wall of the heritage asset and impacts the integrity of the original structure.

There is a glass atrium on the plans of the kind one might have envisaged. However, its purpose here is to connect the First and Second Extensions rather than preserve the character and integrity of the heritage asset.

Landscaping and street frontage

The current gap between 7 and 7A offers a delightful garden, mostly behind open railings, which contributes to the street scene and contributes to the feel of a rural village. The space offers views of the rear garden and its various trees and adds to the charm and context of the heritage assets. The garden has been a little neglected since the properties were vacated but could easily be restored. Almost all of its contribution to the Conservation Area will be lost under the present proposals. The gap between the two properties will be filled by the First Extension and, in particular, a very prominent (and slightly incongruous) chimney which, whilst distinctive, is not echoed anywhere else in the Conservation Area.

At the same time major changes to the boundary along the street are envisaged. We note, in this respect, that there are major inconsistencies between different parts of the proposal, and it is unclear as to what boundary treatment is being applied for. The drawing of the South elevation shows the railings will be retained (albeit with replacements of a different style) across almost all the street frontage with just a short wall section at the parking court end. We do not have any objections to this.

This is contradicted by the Site Plan which shows the entire street frontage, including the parking court, bound by a 1.6m (well over five feet) brick wall which will continue round to the area outside the current front door adjacent to no. 5 High Street. No explanation of why such a substantial wall is needed is offered. In total, when combined with the proposed boarded gates to shield off the parking area from the High Street, the proposal is to introduce a high brick wall some 50 metres in length. This wall will create a very different feel to this part of the Conservation Area and will be entirely to its detriment. In brief, the wall and the gates will obliterate the open and rural feel contributed by the heritage asset's garden, railings and setting.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer