Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 22 January 2026

by E Catcheside BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 February 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/H0520/W/25/3373237
Sycamore Cottage, Main Street, Hamerton, Cambridgeshire PE28 5QT

- 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 John Souter against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application reference is 25/00382/HHFUL.
- The development proposed is extension to rear of property.

Appeal B Ref: APP/H0520/Y/25/3373236
Sycamore Cottage, Main Street, Hamerton, Cambridgeshire PE28 5QT

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
- The appeal is made by Mr John Michael Souter against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application reference is 25/00474/LBC.
- The works proposed are small extension to kitchen.

Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed and Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site address differs slightly between the two application forms. I am satisfied that the address in the banner heading, which is taken from the application form for Appeal B, accurately describes the appeal site.

3. The two appeals relate to the same site and the same scheme. The difference between them is that Appeal A seeks planning permission for the development whilst Appeal B seeks consent for the proposed works to the listed building. The two appeals are covered by separate legislative regimes. However, I have dealt with them together to avoid unnecessary duplication.

4. As the proposal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act).

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building known as Sycamore Cottage[1] or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, and whether the settings of other nearby listed buildings would be preserved.

[1] List entry number 1130109

Reasons

Heritage assets, significance, and settings

6. Sycamore Cottage is a Grade II listed timber-framed house, thought to date from the 17th Century. The historic part of the cottage has a simple rectangular form with a horizontal emphasis owing in part to its wide frontage, the broadly consistent height of its windows and doors, and the half-hipped roof with relatively low eaves.

7. The building has been significantly altered over the years, including through a side extension with a pitched, slate roof, which the appellant states is Victorian in age. More substantial renovation works were carried out in phases in the 20th Century, which included the replacement of the thatched roof with tiles, the construction of a rear lean-to kitchen extension, and the creation of upstairs bedrooms with dormer windows. Replacement windows and doors were installed more recently, in circa 2021. There is also a wooden pergola attached to the rear kitchen extension.

8. Many of the changes to the property occurred prior to it being formally listed, including when the building was in poor condition. However, cumulatively, they have significantly altered its traditional form, proportions, and appearance. The loss of the thatch removed a distinctive feature that would have revealed information about the construction methods and materials from the time in which the building originated, and the outward expansion of the building, along with the relatively high eaves of the side extension, have detracted from the traditional, simple form of the historic property. Consequently, there has been significant erosion of the historic and architectural value of the building.

9. However, the side and rear extensions are each stepped down from the ridge of the main building; and the sloping roofs at the rear ensure a tapering in height away from the traditional back wall. Consequently, the existing extensions, particularly at the rear, are subservient to the historic core of the building, which retains its hierarchical importance. Notwithstanding the extensive changes that have occurred, the oldest part of the cottage remains discernible in public views from the street and in private views to the rear due to the surviving historic fabric.

10. The cottage forms part of a traditional group of buildings, two of which have been demolished, that are sited near to the crossroads where Main Street, Gidding Road, and Alconbury Road converge. Whilst there are some similarities in the form and appearance of Sycamore Cottage and Elm Cottages, the buildings in the village display a mix of characters, and there is diversity in their outward appearance. Overall, the historic character of this part of the village is informed by its distinctly rural setting, with well-spaced buildings, some of which are historic, and the narrow lanes, open fields, and pockets of woodland that surround them.

11. Insofar as it is relevant to these appeals, the significance of Sycamore Cottage is derived from its age, the surviving historic fabric and plan form, and its architectural and historic interest as a vernacular home that provides evidence of rural 17th Century development in this area. The setting of the building, including the private amenity space, and adjacent roads and fields, also contributes to its special interest by allowing the historic structure to be experienced and understood from public and private vantage points.

12. Elm Cottages are Grade II listed, entitled on the list entry as 'Cottages Circa 16 Metres North East of Sycamore Cottage'[2]. The cottages comprise a timber-framed and plastered building with a thatched roof; that is thought to date from a similar time as Sycamore Cottage. Insofar as it is relevant to these appeals, the significance of the Elm Cottages lies in their age, surviving historic fabric, and traditional appearance. Sycamore Cottage, which forms part of the setting of the Elm Cottages, contributes positively to their special interest because, together, the buildings provide information about development in Hamerton in the 17th Century.

13. The Grade II listed Church Bridge Crossing Alconbury Brook[3] is located to the east of Sycamore Cottage. According to the list description, the bridge is of Medieval origins with 20th Century repairs. The bridge carries pedestrians and vehicles across the brook, and it has distinctive, white wooden railings. Its significance, insofar as it is relevant to these appeals, lies in its age and its materials, which are indicated by the list entry to include reused stone from a nearby dissolved priory. The wider village setting, including the appeal site, contributes positively to the special interest of the bridge, because of its historic function in providing connectivity within and around the settlement.

Effects of the proposal

14. The roof covering on the kitchen extension is not historic fabric and, therefore, no harm would arise from the replacement of the tiles as a matter of principle. I note the Council's concerns that the slate proposed is not intended for use on shallow roof slopes such as this. However, alternative evidence from the appellant indicates that the slate could be used effectively if appropriate construction methods were used. Given that the specification of the replacement roof covering is a detailed matter, I am satisfied that it could be agreed through conditions if the appeals were to be allowed, along with the construction methods. This would ensure that no harm would occur to the integrity of the building through inappropriate replacement roofing materials or methods.

15. The proposed extension would not lead to the loss of historic fabric because it would be attached to the kitchen lean-to, which itself is a relatively modern addition. Indeed, the proposed siting for the new extension would ensure that the oldest part of the building would remain intact. However, unlike the old cottage, with its horizontal emphasis, the extension would have a vertical dominance owing to the narrowness of its walls relative to its height, and with eaves that would rise above the eaves of the main cottage. The upwards emphasis of the extension would be further exacerbated by the high windows, which would span a large proportion of the width of the side and rear walls thus drawing attention to the upper parts of the structure. Overall, due to its uncharacteristic form and proportions, the extension would have an incongruent appearance that would have a harmful prominence on this historically sensitive site.

16. Whilst the overall height of the extension would be lower than the historic roof ridge, it would nonetheless be significantly taller than the lean-to structure to which it would be attached. Furthermore, the proposed half-hipped top, whilst inspired by the form of the old cottage roof, would fail to integrate sympathetically with the low, sloping roof of the kitchen extension. The proposed addition would, therefore, depart from the gradual tapering in height from the traditional rear wall that is

[2] List entry number 1222843
[3] List entry number 1130108

currently present, leading to a harmful upscaling of the more modern structures to the rear. For this reason, the extension would lack subservience to the existing house, and it would harmfully undermine the hierarchy of the existing built form, detracting from the value and importance of the historic core.

17. I recognise that the conservation of buildings is an active process of maintenance and managing change, as is set out in the Planning Practice Guidance. In that regard, Policy LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (May 2019) (LP), when read together with its supporting text, does not preclude developments such as this that would be articulated as a contemporary phase of the building. However, it is nonetheless a clear requirement of Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of the LP, taken together, that development should demonstrate high quality design that respects the historic form of the heritage asset. Given my findings in respect of the design of the proposed extension, it would fail to meet these policy expectations even if it were constructed with matching materials.

18. Given that the extension would, in all reasonable likelihood, endure in the longer term if consent was granted, the harm caused would be long-lasting. This adds to my concerns about the acceptability of the appeal scheme on this site. Moreover, whilst it could be necessary to raise the floor level of the extension to mitigate flood risk, there is no clear and convincing justification for its height, because the accessible accommodation would be limited to the ground floor.

19. Due to its siting to the rear of the existing building, the extension would not be visible from Main Street and Alconbury Road. Moreover, its prominence in glimpsed views through the boundary hedging from Gidding Road and the Elm Cottages could be reduced through additional planting, which could be secured through conditions if the appeals were to be allowed. Consequently, there would be limited impact on views from public vantage points, such that the settings of the listed Elm Cottages and the bridge across Alconbury Brook would be preserved. However, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent special interest, irrespective of whether any changes to it could be observed from public vantage points. Therefore, the absence of public views would not, in and of itself, justify the harm that would be caused to the host property.

20. Overall, whilst I am satisfied that the settings of the nearby listed buildings would be preserved, and having regard to my duties under the Act, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed Sycamore Cottage, and the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses. Consequently, the proposal would cause harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset.

Heritage balance

21. The harm that would be caused to Sycamore Cottage would be less than substantial in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), and to a low degree. However, less than substantial harm should not be equated to a less than substantial planning objection and I ascribe great weight to the conservation of the listed cottage, as the Framework requires me to do. The Framework states that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification; and that the less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

22. It is clear from the evidence that the condition of the existing lean-to roof covering on the kitchen extension is sub-optimal. The replacement of the roof tiles would help to manage issues with water ingress which have the potential to cause damp issues within the adjacent historic fabric in the longer term. Consequently, the replacement roof covering would help to preserve the listed building and would provide a heritage and public benefit that weighs in favour of the proposal.

23. The use of sustainable materials could improve the thermal performance and ventilation of the building, thus the proposal would improve its energy efficiency for the public good. There would also be some social and economic benefits arising through the creation of jobs and the purchase of materials during the construction process. Collectively, these are public benefits that are supported by the Framework and they carry positive weight.

24. The proposal would deliver additional floorspace and would improve the functionality and daylighting of the internal space according to the appellant's needs and preferences. However, there is no evidence to indicate that the use of the property as a dwelling would be under threat in the short or the longer term without the appeal scheme in place. Consequently, these improvements would amount to private benefits, rather than benefits for the wider public. Whilst the appellant's wishes to improve and enlarge the living space are understandable, the development and the works would not conserve the heritage asset in a manner that would be appropriate to its significance.

25. Taking all of the above into account, the public benefits in this case would not be sufficient to outweigh the considerable weight and importance that I ascribe to the heritage harm.

26. Overall, the harm that would be caused to the significance of this Grade II listed building brings the proposal into conflict with Policies LP11, LP12, and LP34 of the LP which, taken together, seek high quality proposals that protect and enhance the architectural and historic character of heritage assets. There would also be conflict with the historic environment provisions within the Framework.

Other Matters

27. No harm has been identified in respect of the living conditions of neighbours, biodiversity, trees and landscape features, or flooding. Based on the evidence before me, I see no reason to take a different view. These matters weigh neither for nor against the proposal and, therefore, they are not determinative to the outcome of the appeals.

Conclusion

28. For the reasons given above, Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

E Catcheside
INSPECTOR