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The Gables

West End

Ampleforth

YO62 4DX

8-04-19

Application Ref NYM/2018/0730/FL



Sycamore Cottage, Ampleforth

Sycamore Cottage is a semi-detached house which is linked to our house, The Gables. We have some significant objections to the proposed works.

Design and Access Statement and Draft Local Plan: The overall projection of the proposed extensions are considerably greater than the norm. It is not, as suggested in the submitted Design and Access Statement "in keeping with the general pattern of extensions built on the rear of houses in this part of the village". Policy CO18 of the Draft Local Plan is clear that developments should "not adversely affect the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers". The proposals currently submitted for Sycamore Cottage would entirely remove the little amenity currently enjoyed in our property to the west, The Gables. Moreover, by virtue of the elevated Cottage extension and Studio proposed, we would also be at risk of losing the amenity we ought reasonably to be allowed to enjoy within our private, internal accommodation.

Cottage Extension

Light: the extension proposed will have a major impact on our living space outside. The terrace to the north of our house was built in the 1960s and is a well-established terrace comprising of very old York stone. It is easily accessible from the kitchen and is the only level area in our entire garden. This space is where we spend the summer, it is our 'outdoor room'. We have enjoyed many happy times on this patio since we arrived at The Gables fifteen years ago.

Although it faces north and lies in the shadow of the semi-detached properties, from spring to late autumn the terrace benefits from easterly sunshine. There is a gap between Sycamore's semi-detached building and Sycamore's outbuilding of roughly ten metres, which provides our only aspect of 'open sky'. This enables a valuable source of light to shine directly on the terrace from early morning in the summer to about mid-afternoon. To the south we are blocked by our own and our neighbour's property, to the west we are blocked by terraced housing that runs up our western boundary, which means we don't have south-facing or westerly sun/light. We are therefore only able to enjoy sunshine from the east, and mainly in the morning. Our fig tree planted up against the east wall has its leaves and fruit turned to the east, proving that this is our main source of light.

The building of the double storey, followed by the single storey extension, will block this valuable source of light as it is against our east wall and its height will dominate our terrace. According to the proposed plan the house wall will finish where Mr Judge has built a log shed against our east wall. There is then three metres before the proposed studio is built against the outbuilding. Therefore, what was an open space of approximately ten metres with low sloping roof lines to our east will become a 'boxed in' area - we would be shut in to the east (the proposed extension and proposed studio), to the north (our property) and to the west (the row of terraced cottages). In other words, where there was at least 'open sky' to the east with a slight view, there would be structural building walls and a much higher, more dominant roof-line to the south-east. At the moment, the roof-line is concurrent with both properties, but the proposed extension will create a much higher roofing area, which will block out south-east light.

As mentioned, we have a wall-trained fig tree against this east wall, which we have allowed to grow over the height of the wall, to disguise the shed that was erected on our boundary wall two years ago, but at any time this can be re-trained and cut back. The same cannot be said for an extension the size of that planned next door.

Our house lies at the bottom of a fairly steep hill and you may well appreciate how wet a north facing, hill-facing area can be. Directly outside our house is a mini yard which we use to store coal, bins etc. This area usually dries out with the summer sun, but should the double storey be built, this area is going to remain wet and difficult to clean. We usually remove the fungus and moss that grows here during the summer when it is dry. This is going to be extremely damp all year round if the extension goes forward.

Light and kitchen window: In addition, the double and single storey extension will block significant light to the kitchen window which is adjacent to the boundary wall, overlooking the mini yard. In particular, the height of the double storey extension will begin one metre away from our kitchen window and extend one metre outwards before beginning to slope. The

kitchen window already has reduced light due to the high raised wall in front of it which is one metre away. Internally, and directly underneath this window is our main kitchen counter. Here we have our oven, kettle and this is where we do all our food preparations – work, as you will appreciate involving safety hazards, such as the use of kitchen knives, boiling water, hot pans etc. This area is already dimly lit, but there is currently enough light informing this space for us and our children to safely use our kitchen utilities. Our daughter, aged thirteen, regularly bakes cakes at this counter and enjoys her own cooking experiments. We feel that the extension, particularly the double storey structure is so close to this kitchen window that it will further shadow and block much of the light we currently have access to. Once the extension is built the loss of light will be irretrievable.

Our far kitchen window, which is much bigger, is not where our main preparation of food occurs – it is the back entrance to our property and acts more as a lobby. Our kitchen counter, where we prepare and organise our meals, does not benefit from light from this further kitchen window. This is because there is a right-angled mini wall that separates the two areas of our kitchen, which means light from the far kitchen window does not reach the area under the smaller window where we prepare food.

Aesthetics: The extensions in the past along the back of these cottages visible from our terrace have been flush with the neighbouring walls. We concur with the Building Officer's comment (which Mrs Bastow made reference to during the recent site visit of 5 April) that it would be preferable if the double storey extension were flush with the current gable ends of both properties. There has been nothing anywhere near the size of this extension along our row of semi-detached and terraced cottages and it feels completely out of character. The extension of Sycamore Cottage will be almost double the footprint of the original house. The view from across the road is roughly where Kirks café enjoys a view of the treeline above Sycamore. The erection of a large extension plus a 5 by 5 metre summer house and workshop in a Conservation Area, roughly the size of a double garage, is of concern. The proposed build, sited on a downward slope, may also have an impact upon water run off from Sycamore onto the street, let alone The Gables.

We feel that this increase in size would be highly inappropriate for a semi-detached cottage and particularly for a cottage that already has three floors. Contrary to the design statement, having been shown round Sycamore Cottage many years ago, we are aware it has three usable storeys, the upper storey being spacious – far more so than our own third floor attic space, which is too low height-wise for adults to use. Mrs Bastow made reference to the need of our neighbours to have a double storey extension a metre beyond where both properties currently end. This is to provide space for a dressing room and an ensuite bathroom.

We are a family of four who do not have the same upper storey, third floor space which our neighbours enjoy, and we take issue with the reasoning that a master bedroom with dressing room and ensuite bathroom is a priority over our own access to light.

While we understand the need for our neighbours to update and improve their dwelling, especially their kitchen, it is already a four-bedroomed cottage with ample space on the top floor. In addition, there is considerable extra space in the substantial outbuilding which, as mentioned before, is another two-storey building. This outbuilding is quite a large barn conversion which we understood at the time of conversion, already serves as a studio and workshop and has ample room for any extra accommodation.

Damp: The Gables was built in 1745. It is an old building and therefore has idiosyncrasies that modern houses don't have. For example, Sycamore Cottage is built 0.8 metres above The Gables. Like many old properties that lie at the bottom of a hill, it is susceptible to damp issues, particularly due to the difference in height between the two buildings. When the Judges had an oil tank next to our kitchen wall, our downstairs loo adjacent to the kitchen flooded every time it rained. This was despite it being plastered with cellar basement plastering, which is meant to be water resistant. The part of the kitchen adjacent to the toilet, also suffered from wet. Since the oil tank has been removed, however, both areas have been completely dry and we have had no more flooding.

We are certain that should Sycamore Cottage extend along the boundary of The Gables, we will have a return to the damp problem and potential flooding in the downstairs loo and throughout the length of the kitchen. As our kitchen is a fitted one, there is very little aeration behind the cabinets and therefore these areas remain damp. We have already had damage to the kitchen cabinets on the floor adjacent to the toilet due to flooding and lack of aeration. The wooden footings of the cabinets have partially rotted and need replacing.

Should the extension be built we have strong concerns that this problem will return right the way along the kitchen wall and we are genuinely concerned about fungal growth and mould, which occurs with prolonged dampness. The 'smell' of mould and damp is uncomfortable, and possibly even causes allergies. It is likely, in our opinion, therefore, that the extension would create an unhealthy environment, potentially affecting the health of our family and once again become a worrying and tiresome nuisance as anyone who has regular flooding in their house can testify.

Structural issues: We are equally concerned about structural damage which could occur during the excavation process. There may be cracks or fissures or slippage in footings that could arise following the building work, either at the time of drilling and building, or at some point in the

future. Unlike many other semi-detached properties, our foundations are old and not built on the same level. In order to dig down to the foundations of Sycamore Cottage, the drilling would have to take place down a significant section of our kitchen wall, which is below the level of our neighbour's property. There is every possibility that the vibrations could cause shifting in our below-ground wall. It could lead to a real lack of stability and an increase in water movement.

In addition, we know that our house has no foundations. We know this because we had to excavate our yard to address a water issue. The property is unshored and unpinned and therefore liable to be far less stable despite the thickness of the walls than other properties with better foundations. Although we would expect a structural surveyor to be involved during the process, we have no guarantee that our neighbours would take responsibility for any damage caused, either at the time or in the future.

Boundary access: We also have concerns over the ability to access the garden wall which runs at right angles opposite the kitchen wall to the outbuilding. The new extension would be too close to the garden wall for us to properly repair it and access it on both sides. Not only that, but if the extension were to be built, we would be unable to access our own outside kitchen wall because of the wall built right next to it.

Summary: The building of this extension would compromise and affect our amenities and well-being, internally and externally. Internally, it would increase our level of damp within the kitchen, potentially causing electrical hazards and providing a damp environment for mould/fungi to fester, which is unhealthy for us and our children. It could cause structural damage to our kitchen wall and undermine the uncertain footings of the property.

Both internally, within the kitchen, and externally, the extension would diminish our light significantly. This reduction of east sunshine which we currently enjoy and the physical presence of a double-storey building right next to our boundary, would over-shadow us. Such a big extension, greatly increasing the size of the original dwelling, cannot be unbuilt and reversed. It is an unacceptably large extension, coupled with the planned studio. Together with the outbuilding, this extension will reduce our only east-facing source of light and add to the number of walls and built-up space already surrounding us. We do not believe that this increase in buildings is appropriate in a village setting in a conservation area, nor do we feel that the double extension with dressing room and ensuite bathroom has priority over our access to light, particularly in our kitchen, where it is most needed.

Summerhouse/Workshop

Some years ago, a near neighbour was given permission to build a four metre high cabin/workshop/summerhouse at the top of his garden. The size and height of this cabin is similar to the one proposed here. Following the construction, the next-door neighbour was so dismayed by the visual impact of the summerhouse, that she sold up and left. This cabin can be seen from most of the surrounding gardens and it remains a physical eyesore. The issue with building big structures in this area is that they tend to be sited high up. This means that they not only block the view of the woodland that runs along the ridge, but they feel so much more dominant because they are higher up.

We want to object to yet another big structure going up in our neighbour's garden. We already know what a physical obstruction it will be and how much it will interrupt and block our view - the beauty of the woodland backdrop. Though we can understand why our neighbours may want to enjoy the view of the village from the elevated position, we feel it is inappropriate for its size, making it a dominant landmark especially from the road. Our neighbours already have a double French door on the upper storey of their outbuilding, which looks directly up our garden as it is sited slightly over the mutual boundary on our side. We feel this is another structure our neighbours want to build, having just built a substantial 2.85 square metre shed in the same area as the proposed summerhouse and against our side. We have made no complaint about the construction of this shed because they have every right to put a shed where they like. However, this additional imposing building would be a real eyesore and devalue the natural backdrop of woodland in a conservation area, which is enjoyed throughout the year, in winter as in summer.

We understood from Mr Judge at the time he was converting the outbuilding, that the two-storey outbuilding would be the studio and workshop for himself and his partner. We are therefore puzzled as to why they need another workshop and studio. It is, of course, no business of ours, except the amount of conversions and structures they have undertaken and further propose with this submission has a negative visual impact on us and our enjoyment of our garden. We have made every endeavour to shield our garden's privacy with trees, but feel exposed. We are particularly sensitive to our privacy because we have children and over the years our privacy has decreased as our garden has become more overlooked on all sides.