

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

by Timothy C King (BA Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 30 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/D/16/3156308

Crowbourne Grange, Station Road, Goudhurst, Cranbrook, TN17 1EQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Curtis against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/504116/FULL, dated 12 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 19 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is '*Remodelling of existing southern extension to create two storey gable addition. Replacement windows throughout dwelling.*'
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the remodelling and heightening of the existing south flank extension to create a two storey gable addition, along with replacement fenestration to the dwelling at Crowbourne Grange, Station Road, Goudhurst, Cranbrook, TN17 1EQ, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 16/504116/FULL, dated 12 May 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Nos. 16036-SV-01 Rev A, 16036-SV-02, 16036-SV-03, 16036-SV-04, 16036-SV-05, 16036-PL-01 Rev B, 16036-PL-02 Rev C, 16036-PL-03 Rev C, 16036-PL-04 Rev A and 16036-PL-05 Rev A.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural Matter

1. I have slightly altered the proposal's description to better focus on the development involved.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and also the surrounding area, with particular
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regard to its location within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

3. It would appear from its case report and the Reason for Refusal given that the Council's case is predicated on its consideration that the size of the proposed extension would be unacceptable in the contextual setting. From this basis, the Council argues that the overly large addition would detract from the character of this former agricultural building, now in residential use as a two-storey dwelling. An additional consequence would be an adverse impact on the AONB due to the proposed extension's obtrusiveness. In the circumstances I must firstly turn to Policy H11 of the Council's Borough Local Plan (LP) which indicates that proposals involving extensions to existing dwellings located outside the limits to built development, as is the case here, will be permitted if, amongst other things, the extension would be modest and in scale with the original dwelling. The policy's wording continues indicating that the extension should not dominate the dwelling nor result in a poorly proportioned building, nor detract from its character or setting.
4. As no two situations will be identical the term 'modest' cannot be narrowly defined and, realistically, is best left open to interpretation for each individual case. Nonetheless, the policy's explanatory text comments that the Council would normally judge an application as modest if it would result in an increase of approximately 50% in the volume of the dwelling or 150 cubic metres, whichever is the greater, subject to a maximum gross figure of 250 cubic metres. In the case of Crowbourne Grange the appellant indicates that, in May 2001, (the base date for the purposes of LP Policy H11) the dwelling, as converted, had a volume of 1,865 cubic metres. The building was subsequently extended by some 235 cubic metres, and the current proposal would result in a cumulative increase of 432 cubic metres. The Council does not dispute these calculations.
5. The said increase would exceed the stated limit by 182 cubic metres but this must be balanced with the fact that the increase only represents a 23% increase on the building's original volume. It would be expected that in most cases such a significant disparity would not arise. In this instance the gap is indicative of the original building's substantial size and, as such, in this context the Council's figurative guidance as to what would normally be seen as a modest extension, in purely volumetric terms, becomes somewhat less applicable.
6. Turning to the design of the extension itself and its relationship to the host dwelling this should be considered against the current arrangement whereby the building's wide frontage is flanked by single-storey wings with steep, sloping roofs pitching into the building's end walls. Visually, due to the alterations made and associated elevational treatment I consider the flank ends to now have a somewhat awkward physical relationship and, moreover, it seems apparent that the former barn has already lost much of its original character.
7. When looking towards its altered frontage and also its south flank which the proposal seeks to heighten, the impression now given is that of a building with a distinctly residential character. In particular, the prominent central portico

feature and the modern profiled windows installed serve to illustrate this. Only the elevational form and features at the rear of the building still show clear elements of the building's original character, although the various windows installed on the rear walls are also of a modern appearance and are not particularly sympathetic in this regard.

8. Given the existing situation, whilst accepting that raising the south flank with the intended overlying gable-ended roof would add bulk to the building I do not consider that the proposal would impact adversely on its host. In allowing the south flank to take a distinct identity of its own and dispensing with the current loose symmetry with the opposite wing I consider that the proposal would hold visual interest whilst having the effect of reinforcing the building's residential character. The characteristic rear elevational features would be retained, although the proposal would hide its end projection which can be currently seen behind the building's frontage.
9. In such circumstances, and when weighing up the various factors, I cannot agree that the proposed extension and alterations would not preserve the character and appearance of the AONB. The fact that the extension would be visible from all sides of the building does not in itself necessarily amount to a resultant adverse impact thereto. Indeed, I consider that the building's current appearance would benefit from the proposal and the proposed fenestration replacement would result in a more orderly arrangement.
10. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would neither be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building nor the surrounding AONB, and I find no material conflict with LP Policies LBD1, EN1, EN25 and H11, Policies CP4, CP5 and CP14 of the Council's Core Strategy, nor relevant advice within the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Alterations and Extensions.'
11. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all matters raised, the appeal succeeds. In terms of conditions, in addition to the statutory time limit, I impose a condition requiring the use of matching external materials. Also, in the interests of certainty, I impose a condition requiring that the development be implemented in accordance with the approved plans.

Timothy C King

INSPECTOR