

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by R Barrett BSc (Hons) MSc Dip UD Dip Hist Cons MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 5th December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/W/16/3154243 (Appeal A)

Rabbits Corner, David Street, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0BT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs David Blair against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20160482 is dated 11 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the demolition of the existing sun room at the side of the house and the erection of a replacement enlarged sun room at the side of the house'.
-

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/Y/16/3154246 (Appeal B)

Rabbits Corner, David Street, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0BT

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs David Blair against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20160483 is dated 11 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the demolition of the existing sun room at the side of the house and the erection of a replacement enlarged sun room at the side of the house'.
-

Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

3. Appeal A and Appeal B relate to the same site. Whilst I have considered each proposal on its own merits, given that they are similar proposals, and in the interests of brevity, I have dealt with them in one document.
 4. I note some disagreement between the two main parties on the exact size of the proposed addition, in relation to the existing building. However, I was able to fully assess this matter on the basis of the plans before me and what I observed on my site visit.
-

Main Issue

5. In both appeals, whether the proposed works and development would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of Rabbits Corner, a grade II listed building.

Reasons

6. The appeal site includes a timber framed, two storey building with a thatched roof and sixteenth century origins. It is a grade II listed building and a designated heritage asset. It has been extended in the past, including single storey additions at both ends. Despite some additions and alterations throughout its history, the appeal building has a compact, simple, and traditional form, with a generally solid appearance. These matters contribute to its significance as a heritage asset. It sits near the junction of David Street and Heron Hill Lane.
7. The appeal building is set within a large garden and retains its historic relationship with the open land nearby. It has a generally rural setting, which contributes to its significance as a heritage asset.
8. The proposed extension would replace one of those at the end of the appeal building, referred to in the evidence as a sunroom. It would be large in relation to the main building and would harmfully elongate its footprint. Its bulk would dominate the compact proportions of the existing building. When seen with the existing extension at the other end it would seriously erode the compact form of the main building. It would have a more complex footprint, which together with the proposed roof lantern would appear out of place with the simple form of the existing building. Furthermore, the proposed roof lantern, would sit above the proposed roof, which would result in an awkward relationship with the window opening above and the use of a significant amount of glazing, notwithstanding the existing structure, would erode the generally solid appearance of the host dwelling.
9. The proposed addition would be prominently sited, such that it would be seen in views of the listed building, from David Street, Heron Hill Lane and within its gardens. In some of those views, it would be seen together with the existing extension on the other end of the listed building. I appreciate that Rabbits Corner is set back from David Street and planting would limit views of the proposed extension from the streets referred to. However, its prominent siting would increase the harm identified. For all these reasons, it would detract from the significance of the listed building that I have identified.
10. As the appeal proposal would replace an existing extension and would not materially diminish the open space around the appeal building, I consider that it would not harm its generally rural setting.
11. I acknowledge that the existing sunroom requires some repair and that it provides limited space. I acknowledge that it would be constructed of salvaged oak, would be better insulated than the existing structure, and allow proper weathering beneath the first floor window above. I am also aware that its design does not attempt to mimic the existing building and appears as an honest addition. However, these matters together, do not overcome my concern.

12. The appellants have pointed out that the appeal proposal would upgrade the existing property to suit their needs. Further, I acknowledge some benefit in setting the proposed addition back from the front elevation of the listed building so as to express its corner. However, together, those benefits do not outweigh the harm identified. I am also advised that the appellant has carried out sympathetic repair and restoration of the appeal property in the past. Whilst this is noted, it is not justification for further extension that would harm the significance of the listed building.
13. I conclude that the appeal proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural or historic interest of Rabbits Corner. For this reason, it would be contrary to Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Policy TC2 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994). Those policies, together, set out that the Council accords a high priority to the preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment and aims for development to maintain the integrity of the original listed building and conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment.

Public Benefits

14. In accordance with paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I accord great weight to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. I consider that the harm to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial, a matter to which I attach considerable importance and weight. However, in this case, no public benefits, as identified in paragraph 134 of the Framework, are before me, which would outweigh that harm.

Other Matters

15. The appeal property is situated within the Green Belt. The Council takes the view that although the property has been extended in the past, the appeal extension would fall within the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt set out in paragraph 89 of the Framework. As the appeal extension, together with previous extensions, would represent less than a third of the main dwelling, I have no reason to take an alternative view on this matter. Further, as it would replace an existing structure, it would not materially impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
16. I note that the Council has suggested an alternative arrangement that could overcome its concerns. I also note that this does not meet the appellants' needs. However, this matter has not affected my decision on these appeals.

Conclusion

17. For the above reasons, and taking all other matters raised into consideration, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed and the applications for listed building consent and planning permission should be refused.

R. Barrett

INSPECTOR