



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 14 December 2016

by J F Powis BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 26 January 2017

Appeal A - Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/16/3155568

Lees Buildings, Alton Road, South Warnborough, Hook RG29 1RP

- 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 K Barham of Turvey Corporation PLC against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 15/01243/FUL, dated 22 May 2015, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2016.
 - The development proposed is recladding of building, insertion of doors and windows, extension to rear with catslide over.
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Appeal B - Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/16/3155583

Lees Buildings, Alton Road, South Warnborough, Hook RG29 1RP

- 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 K Barham of Turvey Corporation PLC against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01158/FUL, dated 28 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is recladding of building, insertion of doors and windows, extension to rear with catslide over.
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Appeal C - Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/16/3155574

Lees Buildings, Alton Road, South Warnborough, Hook RG29 1RP

- 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 K Barham of Turvey Corporation PLC against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 15/01253/FUL, dated 22 May 2015, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2016.
 - The development proposed is recladding of building, insertion of doors and windows.
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Appeal D - Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/16/3155588

Lees Buildings, Alton Road, South Warnborough, Hook RG29 1RP

- 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 K Barham of Turvey Corporation PLC against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01160/FUL, dated 28 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is recladding of building, insertion of doors and windows.
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Decision

1. Appeal A: The appeal is dismissed.
2. Appeal B: The appeal is dismissed.
3. Appeal C: The appeal is dismissed.
4. Appeal D: The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

5. As set out above there are four appeals on this site. They differ only in the detail of the design of the proposed external alterations to the building. I have considered each proposal on its individual merits. However, to avoid duplication I have dealt with the four schemes together, except where otherwise indicated.
6. At the time of my visit, the appeal building appeared to have been partially clad, with some windows and doors inserted. The appellant submits that the cladding seen on site was approved by the Council under earlier planning permissions. What I saw on site did not closely reflect the plans accompanying any of the appeals before me. For this reason, I have assessed the four proposals as shown on the submitted plans, rather than the development that has actually been carried out on the site.

Main Issue

7. The main issue in all four cases is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, with particular reference to the setting of the South Warnborough Conservation Area.

Reasons

8. The appeal site sits to the north east of the village of South Warnborough. It lies outside of the defined settlement boundary and is therefore within the open countryside where the development plan requires the protection of the rural character and setting.
9. The site comprises a single large building, originally believed to be used as an agricultural grain dryer. It forms part of a wider site occupied by two further large former agricultural buildings. The wider site is bounded on all sides by undeveloped agricultural land but due to its close proximity to South Warnborough is visible from within parts of the village.
10. The site sits on the eastern side of Alton Road, which is a main route through South Warnborough. Road signs indicating to highway users that they are entering the village and that a 30mph speed limit applies are positioned adjacent to the appeal site. As such, the site is located at a transition point between the countryside and the built environment of the village.
11. At the time of my visit there was a steady flow of traffic passing the site. A pedestrian footway begins shortly south of the entrance to the appeal site and leads south along the western side of Alton Road into the core part of the village. The appeal building is of a considerable size and is orientated such that its length runs parallel to Alton Road. It sits close to the road on ground raised above the level of the highway. As a result, it is a prominent feature in the street scene.

12. The development proposed varies slightly between the four appeals. All four of the proposals show the sub-division of the building into eight separate units. Each proposal varies subtly in terms of the layout of windows and doors on the eastern elevation of the building and the detailed palette of materials proposed. Appeals C and D would use the existing footprint and roof form of the building whereas Appeals A and B both propose a lean-to extension along the building's west elevation under a new catslide roof form incorporating roof lights.
13. The extensions proposed under Appeals A and B would bring the building closer to Alton Road by approximately 3.8 metres. I consider that this would result in the building appearing more dominant at this significant entry point to the village, to the detriment of the semi-rural character of the locality.
14. The South Warnborough Conservation Area covers a significant proportion of the village and includes land immediately to the south of the appeal site. In determining this appeal, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and my statutory duties¹ in this regard. Whilst the appeal site itself is not within the Conservation Area boundary, paragraph 129 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires consideration of the effects of development on the setting of heritage assets, including Conservation Areas.
15. Policy CON 13 of the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 and First Alterations to the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006: Saved Policies (April 2009) (LP) states that proposals for development which fail to meet the objectives of conserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a designated conservation area will not be permitted. This is consistent with the approach set out in Section 12 of the Framework and is in addition to development plan policies requiring high quality design that reflects local character.
16. Characteristic features of the Conservation Area include well-spaced properties of a small residential scale, with a predominance of traditional architecture using red brick, timber framing and plain clay tiled and slate roofs. The appeal proposals all involve slate roofs and the installation of timber cladding on the external walls of the building. For Appeals A, B and C, the cladding is annotated on the plans as feather edged larch boarding, whereas for Appeal D, waney edged larch boarding is proposed.
17. The South Warnborough Conservation Area Proposal Statement (1999) (CAPS) notes that some weather boarding is evident on some houses in the village and this was confirmed on my site visit, during which I saw the particular properties cited in the appellant's submissions. However, I noted that in the vast majority of examples of the use of weather boarding or tile hanging within the village, these materials were combined, either at ground floor level or through features such as substantial chimney breasts, with the red brick that is characteristic of the Conservation Area.
18. In contrast, the appeal developments would involve unstained timber cladding of the external walls from eaves to ground level. As a result, the building would have a materially different appearance to the local vernacular of the cited examples and to my mind would be unsympathetic to it. Whilst the final colour

¹ Under s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

of the cladding may be capable of control via planning condition, I am concerned that due to the significant scale of the building, the extent of the cladding, whether feather edged or waney edged, would nonetheless lead to a discordant form of development.

19. Appeals B and D would incorporate brick slips and clay tile hanging into the finish on the east elevation, which I consider would take cues from the local architectural style and add a degree of design interest to the building. Notwithstanding this, I am mindful that the west elevation of the building is particularly sensitive given its visibility from Alton Road, as well as from longer viewpoints to the south and west. Appeals A and B would involve less cladding on the west elevation by virtue of the catslide roof design and so may lead to a less stark appearance, however I am mindful that these proposals would also involve slightly raising the overall ridge line of the building and moving it closer to the road, which would be undesirable in terms of street scene impact.
20. I note the appellant's submissions that the cladding materials proposed in the four appeals are the same as those already approved by the Council in connection with planning permissions granted in 2011 and 2012. However the correspondence provided appears to indicate that the materials in those cases vary from the detail of those before me. In any event, I must assess the four appeals on their own merits.
21. South Warnborough is located in a gently sloping valley, allowing long-ranging views into and out of the village. These views help to root the village in its rural downland setting and as such make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The South Warnborough CAPS indicates that the elevated land at the junction of Ridleys Piece with Gaston Lane provides important views out in a north easterly to south easterly direction across the countryside as it slopes away to the east.
22. Viewed from this direction, the current buildings on the appeal site are utilitarian and functional in appearance but complement their semi-rural location and are in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. Due to the appeal building's size and orientation along a roughly north-south axis, the proposed alterations would create an unduly prominent feature in these important views. As well as the extensive cladding, the proposals would introduce incongruous elements such as velux windows (Appeals A and B), domestic style full height double width windows (all the appeals) and domestic type detailing and elevations (all the appeals). The resulting domestic appearance of the building, regardless of its use, would be out of place in its setting.
23. The building is also clearly visible from within the Conservation Area to the south of the site, due to a gentle bend in Alton Road which allows long views to the appeal site from just north of the junction with Lees Hill. From this direction, the tower structure at the southern end of the building would be emphasised and in all four cases, the proposed design and materials would create a form of development that would be discordant with the built environment within which it would be viewed.
24. I do not consider that the small number of existing trees along the western edge of the appeal site would provide any meaningful screening of the substantial building from this perspective. I further do not deem that the presence of the domestic style front boundary treatments of residential properties on the west

side of Alton Road close to the appeal site would serve to minimise the impact of the appeal proposals on the character and appearance of the area.

25. Taking all of these considerations into account, I consider that all four appeal proposals would cause harm to the setting of the Conservation Area. Having regard to the Planning Practice Guidance, I consider the harm arising to constitute less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset. In these circumstances, Paragraph 134 of the Framework indicates that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, including securing its optimum viable use.
26. In the case of the appeal developments, it may be argued that the proposals would help to facilitate the reuse of a former agricultural building, bringing limited environmental benefits. Some minor economic benefits for the construction industry would be likely to arise as a result of the proposals. While the final use of the building remains an area of disagreement between the parties, it is conceivable that the proposals could contribute to the achievement of either the economic benefits of an employment generating use or the social benefits of a residential use. Nevertheless, I do not consider that these benefits would be sufficient, alone or together, to outweigh the harm to the setting of the Conservation Area that I have identified above.
27. The appeal site evidently has a long and complex planning history. In all four cases, the appeal proposals have the appearance of a terrace of residential units although at the time of my visit, the building appeared to be divided into units for light industrial use. Notwithstanding the disagreement between the main parties regarding the lawful use of the building and regardless of its final use, which are not matters before me, I consider that the appearance of the proposals would significantly detract from the established character of the area.
28. Having regard to all of these matters, I conclude that the development proposed by Appeals A, B, C and D would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, with particular reference to the setting of the South Warnborough Conservation Area. Consequently, in all cases the development would be contrary to saved Policies GEN 1, GEN 4, RUR 2, RUR 3 and CON 13 of the Local Plan, which together seek to achieve high quality design that respects local character, protects the countryside and conserves or enhances the historic environment.
29. I also find conflict in all cases with the Framework insofar as it seeks high quality design and the conservation of designated heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource.

Conclusions

30. For the reasons given above, I conclude that Appeals A, B, C and D should be dismissed.

J F Powis

INSPECTOR