
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2017

by Patrick Whelan BA(Hons) Dip Arch MA MSc ARB RIBA RTPI

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

Decision date: 23 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/16/3161380
31 Hill Road, Haslemere GU27 2NH

- 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 & Mrs Derek Legge against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2016/1032, registered 31 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 4 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a two-bed cottage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the setting of the nearby, Grade II listed building, 29 & 29A Hill Road, and
 - the street scene and the character of the area.

Reasons

The effect on the setting of the nearby, listed building

3. I share the view of the Inspector in the previous appeals¹ on this site as regards the listed building which stands close to its south-east boundary. Though the listed building may have been listed 'for historic reasons', as the last home of Sir Archibald Geikie OM, the celebrated geologist and volcanologist, the building has a distinctive design showing the influence of CFA Voysey. In particular, the relationship between the interior of what was once a single house, the light and outlook provided by its openings and the aspects of the rooms to the garden are visible today. Together with the garden and space around the building, especially its foreground, these factors of its settings contribute to the significance of the building.
4. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the

¹ Appeal Refs APP/R3650/A/13/2200717 & 2201461

impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

5. The frontage setting of the listed building which is set back a substantial distance from Hill Road, appears to be truncated by the plots of modern housing development in its foreground and it is bisected by a high, evergreen hedge which encloses the closest boundary of the appeal site. In these circumstances, the spacious character of the setting to the building appears confined, and the public views of the building are diminished by the proximity of the hedge to the building as well as its height.
6. The proposed house would have a comparatively modest footprint and height, and would be set well off the boundary to the listed building, on ground at a significantly lower level. In this context, the proposal would not disrupt the spatial setting of this aspect of the listed building. A high proportion of the existing public views of the listed building from Hill Road would be retained across the appeal site. And, while the proposed house would feature in views of the listed building, its design would reflect the architectural language of the listed building while retaining a stature of appropriate scale in the shadow of its distinguished neighbour.
7. The Council considers the proposed house would relate more to the alignment and orientation of the houses 31 and 33 Hill Road, than to the listed building, and that it would not appear as a lodge related to the listed building. I am not persuaded, given the division of plots in its foreground and the boundary screening which emphasises the division, as well as the scale of the listed building, that a lodge idiom would be appropriate. I agree that an orientation more akin to the listed building would be helpful in referring to its presence, but, for the reasons of scale and set-back described above, I find the orientation of the proposed house to the road, as in this proposal, an equally sensitive approach.
8. Given the development already in its setting, the site topography, and the planting in front of the listed building, I find no harm from the proposed development to the setting of the listed building. I conclude on this issue that the proposed development would preserve the setting of the building and its significance.
9. The Council refers to various policies in its draft Local Plan. However, given the stage of progress of the new plan which has not yet been independently examined, and in accordance with paragraph 216 of the Framework, the weight I accord it is limited. Notwithstanding this, there would be no conflict with Policy HE3 of the Local Plan 2002. Where development will affect the setting of a listed building, this Policy seeks a high standard of design in terms which include siting, style, scale, density, height, and detailing. Nor would there be any conflict from the proposal with the policies of the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

The effect on the street scene and the character of the area

10. In terms of the street scene, the design of the proposed house in relation to its alignment and orientation, the arrangement of its openings, and its materials and detailing, would not appear out of place with neighbouring buildings. It would retain substantial gaps between its flanks and its side boundaries and a

similar set-back from the street as No 31 so that it would not appear cramped in the street scene.

11. However, the area around the site has a distinctive, spacious character distinguished by large, detached houses of two or three storeys, standing in plots with areas many times greater than their footprints. In this distinctive spatial context, its site coverage, in terms of its footprint and the volume of development, would appear significantly smaller and at odds with the character of the area which has a grander scale. At the same time, the proportion of the plot which would be occupied by building would be substantially greater than the proportion occupied by many of the surrounding houses.
12. I appreciate that Nos 31 and 33 Hill Road are two houses and that one of the pair has a smaller garden in comparison to the other houses neighbouring this site. However, their design resembles a single house, and what appears to be the garden to No 31 provides it with a spacious, garden setting of substantial size. I acknowledge that the proposed house has been designed to appear as a gardener's cottage related to the listed building. However, given that the site is to the foreground of the listed building, and taking into account the legibility of the separating boundary between the plots and their demarcation as well as the proposal's alignment with Nos 31 and 33, the effectiveness of this allusion would be significantly diminished.
13. I note the recent consent granted to a development on Church Hill. While I accept the point made about the greater footprint and plot ratios in that consent, it appears that the house in that case was similar in scale to many of its neighbours, whereas this proposal has a distinctly smaller scale than its neighbours, and the grain of development surrounding the sites in each case is quite different. I am therefore unable to draw any parallels which bear on this case .
14. The proposal would thus have a materially harmful effect on the character of the area in terms of space and scale, and would conflict with saved Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002. These require development, amongst other things, not to harm the visual character and distinctiveness of a locality and to be appropriate to the site in terms of scale and height. It would be at odds too with paragraph 58 of the Framework, which says that decisions should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character. It would fail to accord with the Planning Practice Guidance² which advises that development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development.

Other Matters

15. The Council's statement on housing supply indicates that it has 5.3 years of supply in terms of paragraph 47 of the Framework. However, the appellants refer to an appeal decision³ in this Borough earlier this year which concluded that the level of deliverable housing land supply is likely to fall within the range of 3.4 years to 4.6 years. In the context of a shortfall in housing supply, the proposal would provide one additional house as well as the social and economic benefits associated with the development, to which I attach considerable weight.

² Planning Practice Guidance, DCLG 2014 as amended, paragraph:007, ID 26-007-20140306

³ Appeal Ref APP/R3650/W/15/3141255

Conclusion

16. The proposed development would preserve the setting of the listed building and its significance, and it would provide a benefit of one dwelling to local housing supply in accordance with paragraph 47 of the Framework which anticipates a significant boost to the supply of housing. However, this is significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the harm it would cause to the character of the area, which is in clear conflict with the policies of the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons above, and taking account of all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Patrick Whelan

INSPECTOR