
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 January 2017

by AJ Steen BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 27 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/W/16/3163057
59 High Street, Westerham, Kent TN16 1RE

- 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 Stephen Burgess against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref SE/16/00543/FUL, dated 24 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is replacement of an existing single storey office building with a two storey extension to serve 59 High Street, Westerham.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed two storey extension on the character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding area with particular regard to Westerham Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Westerham Conservation Area comprises development around the centre of Westerham and along the A25 that runs through the town, with a mix of styles and types of buildings that are predominantly two storeys, along with some three storey buildings around the Green and Market Square. The area around 59 High Street comprises a mix of styles of buildings that are mainly two storey in height and located close to the edge of the A25, creating a sense of enclosure to the road through this part of the town.
 4. The existing building at 59 High Street is located amongst the development fronting the road such that it is not a prominent building. It comprises a two storey building with an unusual mansard roof that does not reflect the roofs of surrounding buildings, but contributes to the varied character of the area. To the side is a single storey extension that is now in a derelict condition.
 5. The proposed extension would be two storeys in height to replace the existing extension. It would have a smaller mansard roof than that on the existing building and would be stepped back from the existing front elevation, in an attempt to appear subservient to the main building. However, the proposed sash windows would appear overly large on the front elevation and the proposed mansard roof, along with the way it would be attached to that of the
-

- main building, would result in a convoluted roof design. So whilst the overall scale and materials proposed would be appropriate, the windows and roof of the proposed extension would appear incongruous attached to the existing building and this would result in the proposed extension appearing prominent in relation to surrounding development within the conservation area.
6. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises at Paragraph 132 that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Accordingly, while less than the 'substantial harm' referred to in Paragraph 133 of the Framework, the harm to the conservation area is nevertheless a matter of considerable importance in this case.
 7. Paragraph 134 of the Framework establishes that, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. The only public benefit in this instance is the removal of the unattractive and dilapidated existing single storey extension to the building. However, that benefit is limited and the proposed extension would be more prominent than the existing such that it would not outweigh the identified harm to the conservation area.
 8. The proposed development is also located within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), where the Framework confirms that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty. Whilst the development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would not conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, it would nevertheless be located within the urban area such that it would not affect the landscape or scenic beauty of the AONB.
 9. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed two storey extension would harm the character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding area and would not conserve or enhance the character or appearance of Westerham Conservation Area. As such, it would be contrary to Policies SP1 and LO7 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy and Policies EN1 and EN4 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan that seek to ensure development is of a high quality of design that respects the character of the area and would conserve or enhance the character and appearance of heritage assets.
 10. For the above reasons and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

AJ Steen

INSPECTOR