

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2017

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 6 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/16/3165322

The Old Pump House, Henley Old Road, Henley, Haslemere GU27 3HQ

- 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 Richard Edwards against the decision of the South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application, Ref. SDNP/16/03955/HOUS, dated 3 August 2017, was refused by notice dated 6 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is a 2 storey rear extension and front porch addition.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) the effect on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling; (ii) whether the character or appearance of the Henley Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced; (iii) the effect on the setting of the nearby listed building, and (iv) the effect on the living conditions for adjoining occupiers as regards privacy.

Reasons

Effect on Existing Dwelling

3. On this issue, both the Design and Access Statement and consultation with the Local Planning Authority's (LPA's) Conservation and Design officers has established the origins the Old Pump House and its role in the historic water management of this part of the National Park. There is also a measure of agreement between the parties as to the architectural and historic importance of the tower and its current contribution to the character and appearance of both the building itself and the conservation area, which seeks to safeguard this the heritage of this part of the National Park.
 4. The appellant acknowledges that the foundations of the water tank are the primary reason for the location and size of the proposed extension, but it is considered that *'the tower will still dominate and remain recognisable and the building's original purpose will still be discernible'*. In this context, I saw on my visit that the visual significance of the tower is at its greatest in (i) views of the western elevation as seen from the entrance from the road and along the driveway to the house, and (ii) views of the northern elevation from the lawn that forms part of the gap to No. 74, the listed building.
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5. If the extension were to be built I consider in respect of (i) that although the tower would still be prominent, its 'new position' towards the middle of the extended building would be somewhat incongruous. Just as important, the extension would fail to integrate with the dwelling - in fact the addition would appear as almost semi-detached from the existing building. (This would also apply to the eastern elevation but this is less important in terms of the building's setting than the view in the approach from the public realm).
6. The isometric view from the entrance drive is kinder to the scheme's design because the tower is perceived as retaining a greater prominence. However, even this perspective does not satisfactorily address the extension's poor integration with the host building and the adverse effect on the tower. I accept that an element of detachment allows the tower to be viewed more separately than in a more integrated scheme, but this does not alter my view that the proposed arrangement clearly fails to complement the existing dwelling.
7. As regards (ii) there would be a similar incongruity, with the tower partly obscured by the extension and almost appearing lost in a plethora of roof forms. Its positive contribution to the building and its surroundings would be significantly diminished by the eye being drawn to the bulk and awkward shape of the extension's roof and the extensive glazing in the north-facing gable.

Effect on the Conservation Area

8. In the light of my assessment of the harmful effect on the building, it will be self evident that given the positive contribution that the Old Pump House presently makes to its surroundings, there would also be harm to both the character and appearance of the Henley Conservation Area. I have noted the comments on this issue in the Grounds of Appeal (GOA), but as I do not accept the argument that the proposed rear extension would have a benign effect on the building, in particular the tower, it follows that I am unable to accept the submissions that the character and appearance of the conservation area would at least be preserved.

Effect on the setting of the Listed Building

9. The rear extension would occupy part of the gap between the Old Pump House and the Grade II listed building, and if the block plan is accurately scaled the addition would at its closest be only about 5m from the curtilage boundary and 13m from the building itself. I acknowledge that there is intermediate boundary screening, but all or part of this cannot be relied upon in perpetuity. Accordingly, as the 2 storey extension would be of an inappropriate scale and design it is inevitable that the setting of No. 74 would be harmed, albeit to a limited degree.
10. The issue of light spillage has been raised by the LPA in terms of the effect on the listed building's setting and I accept that there is at least the potential for light pollution in this context as well as in respect of the conservation area and the landscape of the National Park. However, I have taken on board the comments in the GOA that the bedrooms would be used for more limited periods and that the main source of light would be from the ground floor where the boundary vegetation is at its thickest. Overall on light spillage, I conclude that although there are grounds for concern the LPA has not fully demonstrated that this matter materially adds to its case for its refusal.

Planning Balance and Conclusion on Heritage Issues

11. In terms of the LPA's policies, as I have found that harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the host building; that the character and appearance of the conservation area would not be preserved, and that there would be some harm to the setting of the listed building, I conclude that there would be conflict with Policies BE4, BE6, BE11, BE12, RE1 & H12 of the Chichester Local Plan: First Review 1999 and General Policies 1 & 9 of the non statutory South Downs Partnership Management Plan 2013.
12. The Notice of Refusal also cited a number of paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the Framework') including several in Chapter 12: 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. However, as the conservation area, the listed building and the Old Pump House are heritage assets (the first two designated and the latter non-designated) Chapter 12 requires further consideration to be given, despite the LPA's failure to do so.
13. Firstly, in respect of paragraphs 133 and 134 I consider that in this case the proposal would result in 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the two designated heritage assets, albeit this does not alter my judgement that the merits of the development are insufficient for the appeal to be allowed. There is a public benefit in the form of the extended appeal building becoming a more sustainable and viable dwelling for family occupation and in this regard I have noted, and have considerable sympathy with, the family's needs as set out in the personal statement in the GOA.
14. However, in my view this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified in relation to the conservation area, especially as there may be other options of securing improved and enlarged accommodation without taking advantage of all the underground tank's foundations, the economies and sustainability of re-using them notwithstanding. Similarly, in respect of paragraph 135 of the Framework, the harm to the building's significance in terms of both its character and appearance would be too great for the appeal to succeed.

Effect on Neighbour's Living Conditions

15. On this issue, the LPA's concern is that the first floor windows of the fully glazed north elevation would unduly overlook the rear garden of No. 74. The GOA's response is that the boundary screening would retain privacy and that no objection has been received from the neighbour. However, my comments on distances and screening in paragraph 9 are relevant here, albeit largely because of the increased propensity for overlooking from the two 'Juliet balconies'. In its present form there is conflict with Policy BE11(3) & Framework paragraph 17.

Overall Conclusion

16. From my findings on the heritage and living conditions issues and all other matters raised for the appellant, I conclude on balance that this particular proposal for an extension to the Old Pump House would be unacceptably harmful for the reasons set out above. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR