

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2017

by Kevin Gleeson BA MCD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P3610/W/16/3160989

Sands House, Hook Road, Epsom KT19 8QB

- 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 Omer Sharif against the decision of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00588/FUL, dated 14 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is ground floor rear and first floor side extension with conversion of loft into habitable room.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission granted for ground floor rear and first floor side extension with conversion of loft into habitable room at Sands House, Hook Road, Epsom KT19 8QB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/00588/FUL dated 14 July 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Proposed Site Plan N/01A Rev A; Proposed Ground Floor Plan N/05B Rev A; Proposed Floor Plans N/06A Rev A; and Proposed Elevations N/07A Rev A.
 - 3) The external finishes of the development hereby permitted, including making good to the retained fabric, shall match in material, colour, size, style, bonding, texture and profile those of the existing building.
 - 4) The rooflight windows hereby approved shall not project beyond the plane of the roof.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed development would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt; and
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area including the St Ebba's Conservation Area.
-

Reasons

Whether Inappropriate Development

3. The appeal property is a large detached house, currently in a state of disrepair, located within an area of informal open space. Extensive mature hedges and trees border the appeal site. The property is to the south of one of the original St Ebba's Hospital buildings whilst to the east and south-east neighbouring residential properties have been more recently developed.
4. The proposed development would involve the introduction of extensions to both the ground floor and the first floor together with the conversion of the loft into a habitable room. The ground floor extension would infill an area created by an existing single storey flank extension and would have a depth of approximately 4 metres and a width of approximately 6.5 metres. The first floor extension would be constructed on the existing single storey flank extension and would be approximately 3.8 metres wide and 5.8 metres deep.
5. Policy CS2 of the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy, 2007 (the Core Strategy) states that within the Green Belt strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development as defined by Government Policy.
6. Paragraph 87 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that inappropriate development within the Green Belt is by definition harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. In paragraph 89 of the Framework it is stated that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be considered as inappropriate subject to a number of exceptions including the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
7. Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies Document, 2015 (the DMP) states that the extension of buildings in the Green Belt will only be supported where the proposal would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on rural character through its siting and design.
8. Policy DM3 advises that additions to buildings should be no greater than 30% above the volume of the original building. Whilst the Council indicated that a previously approved but not implemented scheme and the proposed development together would cumulatively add more than 30% of the volume of the original building there is no substantive evidence is before me to confirm the increase in volume.
9. In terms of additions to existing buildings the supporting text to Policy DM3 also makes reference to the need to consider siting, floorspace, bulk and height. The proposed ground floor extension would be sited to the rear of the property adding further to the extant permission. The proposed side extension would sit above the ground floor flank addition.
10. The Council has indicated that together with the extant permission for a 26sq.m single storey extension, the proposed development would increase the footprint by a further 29sq.m. According to the appellant the increase in floorspace would be 21% with the total floorspace being 385sq.m but I have no confirmation of these figures. In terms of bulk and height the proposed single storey extension which would adjoin the two storey main building would be

subservient to the original building whilst the side extension would not reach the height of the main building.

11. On the basis of the evidence before me I find that the proposed development would not result in additions to the building which would appear as disproportionate to the original building. Given the largely residential character of the area within which the appeal property is located I also find that in terms of its siting and design the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on rural character.
12. Paragraph 79 of the Framework states that one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness. The concept of openness relates to the lack of development or built form. Paragraph 80 then sets out the purposes of including land in the Green Belt, the only one of relevance in this case being to safeguard the countryside from encroachment.
13. On the basis of the scale of development and its development footprint I find that whilst there would be a reduction in openness and some encroachment on land not currently developed these effects would be very small.
14. Overall therefore I find that the proposal would not result in disproportionate additions to the original building. Accordingly the development would not result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would not be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and therefore would not be contrary to paragraph 89 of the Framework, Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy or Policy DM3 of the DMP.

Character and Appearance

15. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
16. The appeal property is located within the St Ebba's Conservation Area which is a designated heritage asset as defined in the Framework. The Conservation Area derives its character from an open green and the original buildings of St Ebba's Hospital. Three listed villas dominate the Conservation Area whilst a number of other former hospital buildings remain including the appeal property. The Council has also identified the building as being of townscape merit. The Conservation Area is the focal point of the wider St Ebba's complex which is characterised by recently developed housing set within an attractive landscape.
17. Paragraph 132 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
18. Sands House is a large two-storey Victorian property. It is constructed in brick with the upper floor rendered and has steeply pitched slate roofs. As I have set out above, the form and height of the proposed extensions would not be disproportionate additions to the existing building which is in itself characterised by additions to either side of its main structure.
19. The proposed addition to the south- east of the building when viewed from the front would introduce new fenestration which is in keeping with the existing pattern of openings. The hipped roof would also reflect the form of the

addition on the north-east side of the building. In adding bulk at first floor level the extension would appear subservient to the main structure as does the north-eastern addition. In terms of detailed design the additions to the building would be in keeping with the original building and reflect the materials used. As a consequence I find that the proposed scheme would have some architectural merit and would not detract from the appearance of the original building.

20. Given the modest scale of the proposal and its siting, it would not dominate or result in material harm to host property. Moreover, the scale and siting of the additions and existing vegetation around the site would mean that it would not be readily visible from the wider Conservation Area. It is for these reasons that the proposal would have a neutral effect on the Conservation Area.
21. Having reached the conclusions above, I find that the proposed development would have a neutral effect on the character and appearance of the host property and would therefore preserve the character and appearance of the St Ebba's Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore consistent with Policy DM8 of the DMP which seeks to conserve and enhance heritage assets, Policy DM9 which seeks to enhance townscape and Policy DM10 which establishes design requirements for new development. I also find that there is no conflict with the Framework in respect of conserving and enhancing the historic heritage or requiring good design.

Other Matters

22. Neighbouring residents raised a number of concerns including the effect of the proposed use on traffic and parking, the effect on the privacy of neighbouring occupiers, drainage, noise and disturbance. I had regard to these matters when I visited the site but based on the information before me, these matters do not amount to reasons to dismiss the appeal. Other matters relating to management of the estate are not material to my consideration and I have dealt with this appeal scheme on its own planning merits.

Conditions

23. In addition to the standard implementation condition I have imposed a condition specifying the relevant drawings with which the scheme should accord as this provides certainty. A condition relating to materials is also necessary to ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory. I have amended the condition which the Council suggested in relation to the design of the rooflight windows as this lacked precision but otherwise it is also required in order to ensure the appearance is satisfactory.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons set out above, and having taken into account all other matters raised, the appeal is allowed.

Kevin Gleeson

INSPECTOR