

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 March 2017

by C Jack BSc(Hons) MA MA(TP) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21st March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/17/3169451

5 Little Austins Road, Farnham GU9 8JR

- 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 T Hall against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2016/1880, dated 22 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a single garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council has referred to its emerging Waverley Borough Pre-Submission Local Plan Part 1 2016: Strategic Policies and Sites. However, I have not been provided with any significant details of the emerging plan's progress following publication, or the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies. The emerging Farnham Neighbourhood Plan has not yet been subject to referendum. Therefore, having regard to Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I have ascribed relevant emerging policies limited weight in my consideration of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Great Austins Conservation Area (GACA).

Reasons

4. 5 Little Austins Road (No 5) is a very substantial dwelling, constructed in recent years in a Queen Anne revival style. It sits proudly in its plot, with the principle elevation being clearly visible from the road, notwithstanding the front boundary hedge and gates, which screen it to a limited degree. The GACA, a designated heritage asset, is characterised principally by substantial detached houses of various styles and materials, most of which appear to date from the first half of the 20th Century. The area has a very pleasant character and appearance, where spacious, mature gardens with trees are a strong feature of the distinctive low density, well established, and verdant surroundings.
 5. It is proposed to construct a single detached garage building at the front of the property, in a corner position. The design and materials would reflect those of the main house and the existing garage attached to it at the side. The existing
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access arrangements would remain. The Council has raised no significant concerns with the specified design and materials, and following my site visit I see no reason to disagree.

6. The house is set closer to the road than most others in the area, leaving a relatively small front parking and garden area. It is proposed to locate the garage in an area that is currently part parking area and part raised beds. This area is set down from the road, which would limit the impact of the scale of the building in the street scene. Nonetheless, the garage would partially obscure the front elevation of the house at close proximity and in a prominent forward position. This would result in an uncomfortable relationship between the two buildings. While the garage would be notably subservient to the main building, its position in front of the principal façade would nonetheless detract from the strong appearance of the front of the house in the street scene.
7. For these reasons, the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host property and of the wider street scene to some degree. Consequently, the character and appearance of the GACA would be neither preserved nor enhanced as a result of the proposal. I note that it is proposed to enhance the front boundary planting to provide additional screening. However, even if a very effective hedge screen was established, the principal elevation of the house would still be apparent in public views through the gates, in which the forward siting of the garage building would continue to compete with the main elevation.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the GACA, contrary to the expectations of the Framework. It would conflict with saved Policy HE8 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 (WBLP), which seeks to preserve or enhance the character of conservation areas, including by ensuring that the design of new development is in harmony with the characteristic form of the area in terms of scale, height, layout, design, building style and materials. It would also conflict with saved Policies D1 and D4 of the WBLP, which among other things seek to ensure that development would not harm the visual character and distinctiveness of a locality and would make a positive contribution to the appearance of the area; and with saved Policy BE6 of the WBLP, which seeks to retain the character of low density residential areas such as Great Austins.
9. I quantify the extent of the harm to the GACA as being less than substantial in the context of paragraphs 133 and 134 of the Framework. Such harm needs to be balanced against any public benefits the development might bring. There would be a minor benefit associated with the provision of additional secure parking and storage provision, and I have afforded this a small amount of weight in favour of the development. However, this is significantly outweighed by the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the GACA.

Other Matters

10. In reaching my conclusion on the main issue, I have considered the appellant's position that a number of other properties in the GACA have front garages. During my site visit, I noted some examples, including at The Glen nearby in Little Austins Road. However, the majority of properties I saw in the GACA do not have outbuildings forward of the principal elevation. The situation at The Glen differs significantly from the appeal proposal because the main house

is set significantly back from the road and the timber garage building is well separated from, and therefore does not unduly compete with, the host property as a result.

11. A number of trees would be removed as a result of the proposal. I accept the Council's view that replacement tree planting and details of front vegetative screening could have been secured by condition in the event that planning permission was to be granted.
12. I conclude that none of the matters discussed in this section of my decision add materially to the case for or against the appeal.

Conclusion

13. For these reasons, and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Catherine Jack

INSPECTOR