

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 April 2017

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 24th April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/D/17/3167983

Forge House, Charcott, Tonbridge, TN11 8LG.

- 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 Peter Beare against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref SE/16/02659/HOUSE dated 25 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 9 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of single storey outbuilding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed outbuilding on the character and appearance of Forge House, which is grade II listed, and the local area.

Reasons

3. The Appeal site is located within Charcott, which is a small hamlet within a rural area and within the Green Belt. Although the site is within the Green Belt the Council does not object to the proposal on these grounds and it is satisfied that the proposal would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There is no reason to take a different view.
 4. The age, size and design of the buildings within Charcott vary considerably as do the plot sizes. At the heart of the hamlet is a small triangular green, with the main vehicular approaches to it being from the west and south.
 5. Forge House is one of the oldest dwellings in the hamlet, dating from the 15th or 16th century and was probably constructed as a hall house. It has previously been occupied as both a single dwelling and a pair of dwellings and has been altered and extended over the years. Visually the dwelling is clearly influenced by local architectural traditions and has a large, deep and uncluttered plain clay tiled roof with a single ridge stack. The immediate setting to Forge House comprises open garden area which surrounds it. This garden area is integral to and makes a material contribution to the presence, rural character and thus the significance of the listed building, particularly when viewed from the street scene to the southwest and north.
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6. Forge House is located to the southwest of the green and is set back from the road behind an expansive area of garden and a gravelled parking area. The boundary of the Appeal site is enclosed by hedges, which restricts views into the site, although the roof of Forge House is clearly visible over the hedges from the green. There are full and clear views of Forge House from the main entrance to the property and from the field gate to the side of the main entrance. In addition, the hedge and existing open garden area contribute to the sense of space around the green and the rural character and appearance of the hamlet.
7. From the west Forge House is screened by Charcott garage, which abuts the lane and comprises a former forge building of local interest. As stated in the Appellant's heritage statement the former forge has a historical and contextural association with Forge House that is of some importance.
8. Opposite the Appeal site the buildings on the north side of the lane comprise a mixture of older two storey dwellings set back a short distance from the lane. Together with the former forge they form a sense of enclosure in the street scene, which opens up immediately to the east of the former forge, in the approach to the green.
9. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when assessing proposals for new development which affects the setting of a listed building, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving its setting. Policy EN4 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan (DMP) states that proposals will be permitted where they conserve or enhance the character, appearance or setting of heritage assets.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has similar objectives and defines the setting of a heritage asset as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. It states that when considering the impact of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset great weight should be given to its conservation. Any harm requires clear and convincing justification. Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
11. The design of the proposed outbuilding respects the historic form of the former forge building and the steep roof slope of the host dwelling. The proposed materials would blend in appropriately with both existing buildings and, in view of its subservient size and function, the proposed outbuilding would be perceived as ancillary to the host dwelling.
12. However, due to its combined size and position adjacent to the street and the entrance to the host property, the proposed building would be prominent in views from the street scene. It would partially obscure and dominate views towards Forge House from various parts of the green and the lane to the north of the Appeal site. At the same time, from the street scene to the north the proposed outbuilding would have an unduly enclosing impact on the entrance to and front garden area to the Appal site. This would detract from the spacious and open setting of the listed building and would have a negative

- impact on the street scene as a whole. This is not a matter that could be adequately dealt with by condition.
13. The availability of covered parking spaces would reduce the need for cars to park in the existing driveway. However, any cars parked in the driveway would be screened by the existing hedges in most views. Where they could be seen they would be modest in height and form and would not have a material impact on the essential characteristics of Forge House and its setting.
 14. It is noted that previously the gravel driveway was larger and projected closer to Forge House. This clearly reflected its association with the forge and its previous occupation as two dwellings. From the photograph supplied the larger entrance area was open and spacious and reflected the former agricultural/rural occupation of the property. It maintained the spacious rural setting of Forge House.
 15. As pointed out by the Appellant the former forge building fronts directly onto the lane and historically there was a barn which fronted the lane further to the east. This barn no longer exists and a pair of semi-detached dwellings occupy a similar position, albeit set further back from the street scene. Building lines within the hamlet vary considerably and this contributes to the informal character and appearance of the hamlet.
 16. For these reasons, in principle, the siting of outbuildings close to the lane could in some instances respect the character and appearance of the street scene. However, in this instance, due to its combined siting and size the proposed outbuilding would materially detract from the setting of Forge House. It would also have an enclosing impact on the adjacent lane, which would detract from the spacious and open character and appearance of the green and its setting.
 17. As stated in policy EN1 of the DMP, proposals should not result in the loss of open spaces or green infrastructure that would unacceptably impact on the character of the area. The NPPF states that decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.
 18. Finally, it is noted that the Appellant has considered various alternative locations for the proposed outbuilding, which they ruled out for various reasons. Conversely, the Council has suggested alternative locations for the building within the curtilage of the property and has suggested accommodating the proposed elements of the scheme in more than one building. Irrespective of whether or not the proposed building could be occupied elsewhere on the site, in view of the harm that would be caused by the proposed scheme little weight is given to this factor.
 19. I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the setting to Forge House. Whilst not substantial, the proposed outbuilding would result in a moderate level of harm to the significance of Forge House. There are no stated public benefits which would outweigh this harm. The scheme would also materially harm the character and appearance of the local area. Accordingly the proposal would conflict with policies EN1 and EN4 of the DMP and the NPPF.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR