



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 September 2019

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/19/3229314

4 Beech Court, Wimble Hill, Crondall, Farnham GU10 5HL

- 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 Miss Matthews against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02838/HOU, dated 19 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 9 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a timber conservatory.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of a timber conservatory at 4 Beech Court, Wimble Hill, Crondall, Farnham GU10 5HL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 18/02838/HOU, dated 19 December 2018, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 11236/01, 11236/02 rev A, 11236/03, 11236/04, 11236/05 rev A, 11236/06 rev A and 11236/07 rev A.
 - 3) No development above ground level shall take place until details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the development hereby permitted including the external walls, windows, doors and roofing have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the building as a locally listed building and its setting in the countryside.

Reasons

3. Beech Court is a locally listed building set within landscaped grounds on Wimble Hill, a small cluster of buildings which the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 2009 (HDLP) identifies as being within the countryside. Crondall Lane passes Beech Court to the south, although dense hedging to the boundary effectively screens the ground floor of Beech Court to views from this route. The local listing entry indicates that Beech Court was built in the mid-19th Century and was later converted to flats. The Council have also pointed to the

site as part of a rare example of a non-metropolitan Victorian poorhouse facility which was originally constructed as a school for children of parents in the local workhouse and later expanded to include an infirmary.

4. The building comprises a central axis which is flanked by two storey sections of greater depth with projecting bay features to their side. To the front elevation, two recessed sections either side of a central bay feature each accommodate entrances to internal communal areas providing access to flats within the building. Beneath the traditional roof form, there is a regular pattern to the building's detailing and fenestration. This includes arched windows and entrance doorways with balustrade detailing to each of the inset entrance bays which form a notable feature. Overall, the building appears to have been little-altered, and much of the significance and special interest of Beech Court as a non-designated heritage asset is derived from the historic integrity arising from the surviving architectural form and fabric of the building, together with the largely symmetrical footprint, striking detailing and attractive rhythm which contribute significantly to its imposing character and appearance as well as the building's visual appeal.
5. 4 Beech Court is situated at ground floor level within the eastern part of the building. The proposed conservatory would be to the side of No. 4 where patio doors in the projecting bay to the east flank of the building currently provide access to a paved terrace within a private garden enclosed by low-level post fencing and vegetation.
6. Beech Court is relatively unaltered, and I appreciate that the footprint would be unbalanced to some degree through the addition of a conservatory to one side partly infilling the stepped flank elevation. However, dense boundary screening by vegetation significantly limits potential views from the surrounding countryside to the ground floor part of the building. Additionally, the scale of Beech Court and the set back of the proposed conservatory from the adjacent front elevation mean that it would not be possible to view the proposed development in the context of the building as a whole so as to visually unbalance the building or inhibit an appreciation of its symmetry.
7. There would be no loss of any original fabric of the building. While the development would enclose part of the existing elevation, the proposed lightweight and predominantly glazed structure means that the brickwork façade and fenestration behind would remain visible through the conservatory.
8. In comparison to the two storey scale and substantial footprint of Beech Court, its small scale, form, materials and unobtrusive siting set back from the front elevation mean that where seen, the conservatory would be a discreet and modest addition, clearly read as a subordinate structure to the host building. The stepped façade that it would adjoin would remain dominant and the development would not disrupt the overall rhythm or original plan form of Beech Court, or serve to detract from the character or appearance of the host building or its architectural or historic interest.
9. I find that the development would not undermine the historic integrity of the building or diminish elements which contribute to its heritage value including the intactness of the building and appreciation of its form and character. Consequently, and subject to the use of appropriate materials to reflect the existing building which could be secured by condition, there would be no harm to the special interest or significance of Beech Court.

10. With regard to the location of the site in the countryside, I note that Beech Court is at the eastern edge of the small cluster of buildings at Wimble Hill and that the conservatory would project beyond the existing building line at its east. However, this would be of limited depth and width. In the context of the scale of both No. 4 and Beech Court as a whole, the siting, scale, form and lightweight glazed nature of the conservatory mean that it would be a subordinate feature which would not materially alter the scale of the building or its impact on the countryside. Additionally, screening to the site boundaries ensures that the development would not result in a prominent feature which would adversely affect the character or setting of the countryside.
11. As required by paragraph 197 of the Framework I have considered the effect of the development on the significance of the non-designated heritage asset of Beech Court. In this light, I conclude that the development would not harm the character or appearance of Beech Court as a locally listed building, and there would also be no harm to its setting in the countryside. In this respect, the proposal would comply with the provisions of Policies GEN 1, CON 17, RUR 2 and RUR 24 of the HDLP. Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that extensions and alterations do not materially change the scale of buildings of local interest, and that development is appropriate to the character and setting of a building and area and does not become prominent in the countryside.

Other Matters

12. The Council are concerned that the grant of planning permission would set a precedent for other additions to Beech Court. However, the acceptability of any future proposals would need to be assessed on their own specific merits, and given my conclusion regarding the effect of the proposal I see no reason why this would lead to harmful additions to the building.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR