
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2020

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/W/19/3238618

Hawthorne Cottage, Ewhurst Road, Peaslake GU5 9RW

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Goddard against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/P/00814, dated 8 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 9 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is construction of one new dwelling on infill plot.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application was made in outline, with access, layout and scale to be considered at this stage. I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. The description of development in the banner heading has been taken from the planning application form. This differs from that on the appeal form and decision notice which is outline application to consider access, layout and scale for the erection of a new residential dwelling. For the avoidance of doubt, my decision is based on the description in the heading above.
4. The appellant's appeal submission includes a Heritage Appeal Statement in response to part of the Council's first and second refusal reasons. I have taken account of this in my determination of the appeal.

Main Issues

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with particular reference to the impact on the heritage assets of the Peaslake Conservation Area (PCA) and the adjacent listed building at East View Cottage, and on the wider landscape of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).

Reasons

6. The appeal site comprises a vacant, soft-landscaped parcel of land which was previously part of the domestic garden of Hawthorne Cottage. It lies within open countryside, outside, and adjacent to, the designated settlement boundary of Peaslake village. In addition to lying within the aforementioned AONB, AGLV and PCA, it is also within Green Belt.

Heritage Assets

7. The Council has confirmed that there is no conservation area appraisal or management plan in respect of the PCA. Both parties are agreed that its significance derives from the location of the village set within an attractive valley, with a stream running through it, and a backdrop of hillsides, including the surrounding Hurtwood. As such, the landscape is a defining feature of the village, with the built form being arranged along the flatter parts, or carefully designed into the landscape, whilst retaining views of it to soften and frame it.
8. Both parties are also agreed that the conservation area includes a number of ancient buildings, as well as 18th and 19th Century buildings of traditional construction, plan forms and styles, and that materials include timber framing, render and tile hanging, and Bargate stone, as used at Hawthorne Cottage. Houses and cottages are predominantly set in spacious plots, or as groups or pairs, with garden frontages and land to the sides and rear, whereby views of the landscape are possible. From my site inspection, I concur with this assessment of the defining characteristics of the PCA.
9. I find that this part of Ewhurst Road has a relatively loose urban grain, reflecting its position on the edge of the village and outside the village settlement boundary. It is characterised by pairs of dwellings with clear spaces to the sides of the buildings, which are landscaped and include ancillary outbuildings. Soft landscaping features strongly within the street scene, including a visible wooded backdrop to the rear of the dwellings, large landscaped gardens around the buildings, and highway verges along site frontages, including a deep grassed verge along the appeal site side of the road.
10. The dwellings are traditionally designed domestic scale buildings which reflect the local vernacular, including Hawthorne Cottage and its attached neighbour. On the other side of the appeal site is the Grade II listed East View Cottage, a 17th Century, two-storey, pitched roof, timber framed cottage finished in sandstone, brick and colour-washed render with a plain tiled roof.
11. Although the appeal site has been formerly severed from the garden of the adjacent Hawthorne Cottage, the separation is not obviously apparent when viewed from the street. This is due to the visually unobtrusive post and wire fencing along the side boundary with the host property, the frontage hedging of that property which continues across the front of the appeal site, and the lack of any independent vehicular or pedestrian access to the site across the grass verge at the front.
12. As such, I find that the above boundary and access arrangements, together with the presence of a domestic scale greenhouse and outbuildings on the land, mean that the site still appears as an extension to the adjacent garden when viewed from the road. It is readily apparent from within the street, as the ground levels rise towards the rear, where there is a backdrop of mature woodland which is visible from the street. As such, the site comprises a significant undeveloped landscape buffer between the dwellings on either side, linking with the woodland to the rear, and making a positive contribution to the visual amenities of the street scene. It therefore makes a significant contribution to the aforementioned significance of the PCA, having regard to the defining landscaping, and to the setting of the adjacent listed building.

13. The proposal would result in a substantial amount of the site being given over to built development due to the large building footprint and associated access, parking, turning, footpath and patio areas. I have noted the proposal to plant structured landscaping to the sides and rear of the site, and that a landscaped backdrop would still remain. However, I find that the proposed replacement of existing soft landscaping with a substantial amount of built development, together with the introduction of a new vehicular access which would impact on the frontage verge and front boundary hedging, would result in the urbanisation of the appeal site, and the introduction of a notably tighter urban grain into this part of the street, to the detriment of the aforementioned loose-grained and landscaped character of this part of the conservation area.
14. Notwithstanding that the appeal site does not form part of the curtilage of East View Cottage, it does make a positive contribution to its setting. The proposal would significantly erode this area of green open space to the side of the listed building, thereby diminishing its spacious setting. This is particularly important, as there is no similar undeveloped area to the other side of the building, due to its position close to the neighbouring property to the other side.
15. Appearance is not a matter for determination under this appeal. Although I acknowledge that there are a variety of dwelling designs within the vicinity of the site, I am not sufficiently persuaded by the proposed rectangular shaped building footprint, and elevation drawings indicating a wide-span pitched roof form, that the design of the building would respect the local vernacular of the neighbouring dwellings. Notwithstanding, the matter of design detailing, I find that the combined height, width and depth of the new building, its proximity to the side boundary, and the higher ground level of the appeal site in comparison with that of East View Cottage, mean that the proposal would compete visually with the listed property. This would impact on how the listed building is perceived in wider views, particularly from the street, detracting from its setting.
16. Notwithstanding the proposed set-back position of the new building, the proposed layout of development would be out of keeping with that which prevails in the street. The perpendicular positioning of the new building in relation to the street would be at odds with the prevailing pattern of development where long edges of buildings face the street. The positioning of a large area given over to access, parking and turning at the front of the dwelling would also appear incongruous within the street scene, where landscaped front gardens are prevalent, and parking is mainly located to the sides of dwellings.
17. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the PCA and the setting of the listed East View Cottage. It would therefore harm their significance as heritage assets. As such, the appeal proposal does not accord with Policies D1 and D3 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2019 (GBLPSS), and Saved Policies G5, HE4 and HE7 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 (GBLP).
18. These policies, amongst other objectives, aim to ensure that new development is of a high quality design, reinforces locally distinctive patterns of development, including landscape setting, respects established street patterns, plot sizes, established views, and relationship with other buildings, conserves and enhances the historic environment, including the setting of listed buildings,

and preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to Policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seek to secure high quality design as set out in Chapter 12 and conserve or enhance the historic environment as set out in Chapter 16.

19. In terms of the advice in paragraph 196 of the Framework, the harm to the conservation area and listed building would be 'less than substantial' affecting only their immediate surroundings, and the Framework sets out the need to address the 'less than substantial harm' in a balanced manner against the public benefits associated with the scheme.
20. The proposal would be located in an accessible location, close to the community facilities and services in Peaslake village. The proposed additional residential unit would bring economic and social benefits, including construction jobs, increased local spend and a sustainably located new home boosting the supply of housing, including that specifically for a young family or those wishing to downsize. In this respect the Council has confirmed that it can demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
21. In addition, the appellant states that public benefits would result from the opportunity to secure a robust scheme of hard and soft landscaping and on-site biodiversity enhancements on the site as part of the proposal. However, there would be a loss of existing landscaping and biodiversity arising from the proposal. I therefore accord limited weight to these matters as public benefits.
22. In such terms, though in the broad scheme of things a modest contribution, the above factors can and should weigh modestly in favour of the proposals and can be considered within the context of paragraph 196 of the Framework, public benefits. However, when taken together, these benefits are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the aforementioned harm the development would cause to the character and appearance of the Peaslake Conservation Area and the setting of the listed building of East View Cottage.

Landscape

23. I acknowledge the position of the site at the bottom of a valley where it would have limited visibility in wider landscape views. However, the site clearly lies within the rural fringe of the village, where soft landscaping set between built development is a defining characteristic, and is strongly associated with the elevated vegetated backdrop to the built development along the valley floor, linking through from it. The proposed urbanisation of the appeal site that I have identified, would significantly erode this landscaped framing and penetration of the built development that gives this part of the village a distinctly semi-rural character. The foreground development would also impact on views towards the wider landscape to the rear of the site, when viewed from the street. As such, the proposal would have an unduly intrusive impact on the wider landscape setting of the appeal site and this part of the village.
24. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the wider landscape of the AONB and AGLV. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy P1 of the GBLPSS which, amongst other things, seeks to ensure that the natural beauty of the AONB is conserved and enhanced and that new development does not harm the setting of the AONB or the distinctive character of the AGLV. It would also conflict with Paragraph 172

of the National Planning Policy Framework, which confirms that AONBs are afforded the highest status of protection in relation to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty

Other Matters

25. I acknowledge that the proposal represents an amended scheme from that previously refused under planning application Ref 18/P/01385. Whilst the changes to the scheme have been noted, this does not alter my findings with respect to the current scheme.

Conclusion

26. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Leonard

INSPECTOR