
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 October 2020

by J Williamson BSc (Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/20/3250742

6 Church Street, High Wycombe HP11 2DE

- 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 R Minhas against the decision of Wycombe District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/07610/FUL, dated 27 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is construction of roof extension with one self-contained 1b 2p flat, with associated external terrace, refuse/cycle store. Existing first floor flat reconfigured to suit new common stairwell.
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Procedural Matter

1. The appellant submitted revised plans during the application, all of which were referenced version i2. I have made my decision based on the revised plans.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the High Wycombe Conservation Area (CA), and
 - whether the proposal would preserve the setting of the Grade I listed church of All Saints.

Reasons

Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

4. The town is focused around two marketplaces, Frogmoor and High Street, with the parish church of All Saints, a Grade I listed building (LB), sited broadly between the two. The site is located opposite the church of All Saints and is within the oldest part of the town. Several of the town's best buildings, some of which are also listed, are located within the vicinity of the site. The quality of the traditional buildings makes a substantial contribution to the significance of the CA.
5. A statutory duty requires that I pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a CA; therefore,

considerable importance and weight is attached to this matter. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

6. The appeal building is a 2-storey building with the design of its front elevation at first-floor level attempting to reflect the Georgian character of other buildings in the town. The upper half of the elevation has a symmetrical form, proportionate and identically sized window openings and a parapet wall along the top. The building is positioned in between other 2-storey buildings within a row of buildings on Church Street that face east, towards the church. Of the 6 buildings in the row, 4 of them, 2 at either end, are designed with multi dual-pitched roofs with gables, in contrast to the appeal property and the property north of it, which have flat roofs. Both the appeal building and its neighbour to the north have parapet walls along the top. The buildings within the surrounding area are mainly 2 and 3-storeys high; the more traditional buildings having multi dual-pitched roofs with gables or flat roofs, those with the latter also generally having parapet walls around the perimeter at the top.
7. The proposed extension would introduce a third floor to the building, designed with a mansard-style flat roof with slopes along the front and side. The front and rear roof elevations would both have 3 no. box-style flat roof dormer windows inserted in them; those at the front would project from the roof slope. The mansard-style roof and flat roof dormer windows would be uncharacteristic, incongruous design features within the CA, particularly within the part of the CA where the site is located. The roof of the proposed extension and the roofs of the dormers would extend above the parapet wall, albeit not substantially.
8. I appreciate that views of the proposal would be restricted. However, the points from which the proposal would be visible, ie to the east, from within the grounds of the church, and to the north, from the southern end of Priory Road and its junction with Castle Street, are within what is a very significant area of the CA, sensitive to any form of development. At present, the view of the appeal building from around the entrance on the southern side of the church, comprises a section of roofscape that includes the tops of a traditional dual-pitched roof and chimney with 3 pots. The proposal would significantly alter this view, blocking out and replacing the view of the traditional dual-pitched roof and chimney with the incongruous mansard-style roof and dormers.
9. I consider that the introduction of these incongruous design features into the roofscape of the appeal building and its neighbouring properties would be harmful to the character and appearance of the CA. As the quality of the buildings in the CA contributes substantially to its significance, I conclude that the proposed development would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the CA, which would neither preserve nor enhance it.
10. The development is relatively small-scale and as such, with reference to the Framework, the harm that would be caused to the CA would be less than substantial. In accordance with the Framework, less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The proposal would provide an additional

residential unit; but as it is only one unit, I attach limited weight to this aspect. There would be minor economic benefits resulting from the construction phase. Again, as these would be minor, I attach limited weight to this factor also. Overall, I conclude that the benefits outlined do not outweigh the significant harm to the character and appearance of the CA I have found.

11. Consequently, the proposal does not accord with policies CP11 and DM31 of the Wycombe District Local Plan-2019 (LP), which require new development to conserve, and where possible, enhance the historic environment.

Setting of Listed Building

12. Under s66(1) of The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I have a duty to give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building (LB).
13. As noted, the site is located a short distance from the church of All Saints, a Grade I listed building, which is the highest designation, with only a very small percentage of LBs in the country being designated at this level. This highlights the building's importance. The LB derives its significance from its historic, aesthetic and architectural interests and communal value. The built form of the town has evolved around it. I consider the immediate setting of the church to consist of its grounds and the roads, pedestrianised areas and buildings around its perimeter. I am of the view that this immediate setting of the LB, due to the space it provides around the church and the quality of other historic buildings within its immediate vicinity, contributes significantly to its significance.
14. I concluded above that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the CA, partly as I considered that the resultant public views from the east of the site, primarily within the church grounds, were significant in assessing the impact of the proposal on the CA. The appeal building and the roofscape along the row within which it forms a part are within the immediate setting of the LB. As the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the CA, I conclude that this would also be harmful to the setting of the LB. As such, the proposal does not accord with policies CP11 and DM31 of the LP, which require new development to conserve or enhance the setting of designated heritage assets.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

J Williamson

INSPECTOR