
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/20/3260768

1 Westwood Ho Cottages, Newark Lane, Ripley GU23 6BZ

- 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 Mason against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/P/01041, dated 22 June 2020 was refused by notice dated 20 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion including installation of a crown roof dormer to the rear elevation, 1No roof light to the rear elevation, and 3No roof lights to the front elevation, to form additional habitable space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the Ripley Conservation Area (RCA).

Reasons

3. The appeal property is sited within, and close to the northwest edge of, the RCA. It comprises a semi-detached, two storey dwelling located at the western end of a group of dwellings fronting onto Newark Lane. There is also built development of dwellings and a chapel on the opposite side of the road, which are also within the conservation area.
4. The site occupies a visually prominent position, being readily visible from the street, which is one of key approach roads into the village. It is also discernible in views from Ripley Green, which wraps around the side and rear of the site. This is a large and significant area of public open space within the RCA, and the property forms part of its visual backdrop as viewed from a nearby public footpath which runs through it.
5. The house, and the adjoining property at No.2, date back to within the last 5 years. The building has a traditional design, with a slate hipped roof over brick and rendered walls. There is a strong uniformity of fenestration style and positioning across the front and rear elevations of the building, with horizontal and vertical alignment of window and doors. This is clearly evident in public views of the building from the front and the rear of the site. The roof slopes are plain and simple, with decorative edging details along the roof ridge, slope junctions and eaves. There is also a large feature chimney on the side facing the Green.

6. As such, although of relatively recent construction, the appeal property makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the RCA, fitting comfortably within a townscape which comprises predominantly traditional style residential properties of mixed age and design.
7. The proposed dormer window would occupy a considerable amount of the main rear elevation roof slope. It would dominate this particular part of the roof, due to a combination of its proposed width and depth, and the position of its roof in close proximity to the main roof ridge and west side roof slope and above the ridge height of the subsidiary two storey rear projection. The result would be a visually dominant, top-heavy and cramped addition to the roof, which would be at odds with the simple, uncluttered roof slopes characteristic of the appeal property and the adjacent property at No.2. Due to its size and position close to the side roof slope, the dormer would also visually compete with the side feature chimney, which is a positive design element of the building.
8. The non-alignment of the dormer with the ground and first floor fenestration below, and with the proposed rear roof light, would be at odds with the existing regular fenestration positioning, which is a defining characteristic of the building. The crown roof design, incorporating a significant proportion of flat roof would be unsympathetic to the existing hipped roof form of the building.
9. The proposed roof lights on the front elevation would add a further incongruous element to the building, by introducing visual clutter to the front-facing roof slope. The positioning of the roof lights high within the roof slope, together with the off-centre siting of the middle roof light, would add to the jarring impact of the proposal on the existing front elevation of the property.
10. Accordingly, the proposals would appear visually incongruous and discordant within the existing roof slopes, drawing the eye, and detracting from the character and appearance of the host property. As such, the appeal scheme would also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of this part of the RCA due to the visual prominence of the building.
11. The statutory duty in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is a matter of considerable importance and weight. In terms of the advice in Paragraph 196 of the Framework, the harm to the RCA would be '*less than substantial*'. Consequently, the Framework sets out the need to address the '*less than substantial harm*' in a balanced manner against the public benefits associated with the proposal. In doing so, however, paragraph 193 of the Framework also states 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 irrespective of the degree of harm that might be caused to its significance. In this instance, no public benefits have been put forward in respect of the development to weigh against this harm.
12. The appellant has drawn my attention to other existing dormers and roof lights within the vicinity of the appeal site. I have not been provided their site and planning status details, and it is not for me to comment on the appropriateness of these or otherwise. In any event, the fact that apparently similar roof extensions and alterations may have been permitted is not a reason, on its own, to allow unacceptable development. I have considered the appeal proposal on its individual planning merits, and within the context of the character and appearance of the existing building and the immediate locality.

The existence of other dormers and roof lights in the area does not justify the harm that I have found in respect of the main issue.

13. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host property and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the RCA. It would therefore be contrary to Saved Policies G5 and HE7 of the *Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003*, Policies D1 and D3 of the *Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2019*, Draft Policy LNPH3 of the emerging *Lovelace Neighbourhood Plan*, and the *Residential Extensions and Alterations Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2018*.
14. These policies and guidance, amongst other things, seek to ensure that new development comprises a high standard of design, makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas, and that dormer windows are sympathetic in size and design to the existing property.
15. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to Policies of Chapter 16 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* in respect of the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

Other Matters

16. The appellant has drawn my attention to the support for the proposal from neighbours, and the acknowledgement by the Council that the appeal scheme would not comprise inappropriate development within the Green Belt, would not amount to a disproportionate addition to the building, and would not harm the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. I have noted these matters and, on the basis of the evidence before me, I see no reason to disagree. However, they do not affect my decision in respect of this appeal, which I must determine on the merits of the proposed development before me.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR