



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2021 by Scott Britnell MSc FdA MRTPI

Decision by R C Kirby BA(Hons) DIPTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/20/3261096

20 Langborough Road, Wokingham RG40 2BT

- 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 Nick Kell against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 201637, dated 4 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 16 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is hip to gable loft conversion including the installation of two roof windows into the pitched roof of the front elevation and the addition of a rear dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matters

3. The Council in its officer's report suggests that the appeal site is located in the Wokingham Town Centre and Langborough Road Conservation Area and the Langborough Road Conservation Area. During the course of this appeal both parties have confirmed that the appeal site is located in the Langborough Road Conservation Area and I have proceeded on this basis.
4. The appellant states that there have been no negative comments made by the Council in regard to the design and appearance of the rear dormer element of the proposal. On reviewing the officer's report, I consider that the Council have objected to the entire scheme including the rear dormer element and I have proceeded on this basis.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, and its significance as a non-designated heritage asset, and the Langborough Road Conservation Area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The appeal site comprises an attractive, bay fronted, Victorian, red brick semi-detached dwelling with buff brick detailing and an unaltered slate roof form

with red ridge tiles, located in the Langborough Road Conservation Area (LRCA).

7. It has been identified as a Building of Local Importance, along with its attached neighbour. Whilst no details have been provided in this regard, it seems clear to me that the significance of the host property lies in the quality of its architecture. The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) identifies assets identified by the local planning authority as a heritage asset within its Glossary.
8. The attractive form and detailing of the dwellings along Langborough Road contribute positively to the character and appearance of the LRCA and its significance as a designated heritage asset. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that, in the exercise of the statutory duty, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
9. National planning policy on heritage assets set out in the Framework requires that in determining applications, that account should be taken of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and that new development should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. It also sets out at paragraph 193 that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. In terms of non-designated heritage assets Framework paragraph 197 requires that a balanced judgement is made when assessing the application, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
10. The hip to gable extension would be unsympathetic in form and would add significant bulk to the roof, while the rear dormer element would result in a dominant feature that would cover almost the entire rear roof plane, with its L-shaped form having a visually awkward relationship to the host dwelling. As such, the proposal, would result in an incongruous and overly large, top heavy addition that would be out of proportion with, and would dominate, the well-proportioned and attractive host dwelling. The proposal would significantly erode the architectural integrity of the host dwelling and its roof form, and accordingly its significance as a non-designated heritage asset.
11. Due to the siting of the appeal property and its orientation to the highway, the proposed works would not be unduly prominent in the street scene because the roofscape of the dwelling would be largely screened by the adjacent dwellings. Nevertheless, the proposed development, for the reasons I have set out, would diminish the contribution that the host dwelling makes to the character and appearance of the LRCA. Moreover, as the proposal would be visible from nearby properties and it would be likely to diminish the appreciation that the occupants of these dwellings have for the quality of their surroundings. Consequently, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the LRCA and its significance as a designated heritage asset.
12. I consider that the harm to the LRCA would be localised, and in respect of the significance of the designated heritage asset as a whole, less than substantial harm would result. Paragraph 196 of the Framework requires that such harm is weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

13. It is suggested that the proposal would improve the balance of the paired houses, given the roof extension to No 22. Whilst it is not clear when this development was undertaken and whether planning permission was granted for it, I observed that this feature is an alien form of development within the conservation area. Moreover, the design of the appeal proposal differs to that next door and accordingly the proposal would not achieve the balance suggested. In any event the development next door is not a positive feature and does not provide justification for further unacceptable development. I therefore afford limited weight to this matter in my assessment of this appeal.
14. I note the roof additions at Nos 13, 15 and 17 Howard Road. However, these properties are of a different style and form to the appeal dwelling and are located some distance from it, so are viewed in a different context. The appellant also indicates that there are many side gabled properties in the locality. While I observed there to be a mix of hipped and gabled dwellings in Langborough Road, this does not justify the harm that would be caused to the significance of the heritage assets in this case. I afford limited weight to these matters in my assessment of the appeal.
15. The appellant indicates that the proposal would contribute to the amenity levels of current and future occupants of the dwelling. While this may be the case, this is a principally private benefit.
16. Given my findings above, at most I attach limited weight to the benefits of the proposal. Against this is the great weight that I am required to give the conservation of the LRCA. Consequently, I find that there are no public benefits that would outweigh the harm that would be caused to the significance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset.
17. Moreover, the matters advanced in support of the proposal do not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the significance of the host dwelling as a non-designated heritage asset.
18. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the LRCA. There would be conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document January 2010, which states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are, among other things, of an appropriate scale of mass, built form and character to the area. There would also be conflict with Policy TB24 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan February 2014, which seeks to conserve and enhance designated heritage assets in the Borough, and with Section 4 of the Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document June 2012, which states that dormers should relate to the design of the existing building in terms of roof form. Moreover, there would be conflict with Section 12 and 16 of the Framework relating to design and the historic environment.
19. The appellant refers to a number of other paragraphs within the Framework which he considers relate to the appeal proposal. For the reasons I have set out, the appeal proposal conflicts with the Development Plan and Sections 12 and 16 of the Framework and I do not consider that the paragraphs referred to by the appellant support the proposal.

Other Matters

20. The Council indicate that the proposal would fail to protect the living conditions of the occupants of No 18 Langborough Road¹. With respect to the window in the side elevation of the proposed roof extension, this would serve the landing so is not an area where the occupants would be likely to spend much time. Moreover, the appellant states that this window would be obscure glazed to protect privacy. This could be secured by an appropriately worded condition in the event that the appeal was allowed. With regards to the effect of the proposal in terms of creating a sense of overbearing and enclosure or overshadowing and loss of light, due to the relationship between the dwellings no significant impacts affecting the internal areas or rear garden of No 18 would occur over and above those that already exist. However, the lack of harm in this respect is a neutral factor in my assessment of the appeal and does not outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Conclusion and Recommendation

21. For the reasons given above, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Scott Britnell

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

22. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

RC Kirby

INSPECTOR

¹ Page 4 of the Officer's Report.