



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 December 2020

by C J Leigh BSc(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/20/3260267

The Laurels, The Street, Graffham, GU28 0QA

- 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 G Ghinn against the decision of the South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/20/02351/HOUS, dated 12 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a replacement outbuilding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a detached house that lies within the village of Graffham. The house is of traditional appearance, with hanging tile and brick elevations, and a good distance is retained to adjoining houses that provides a sense of spaciousness to the property and the plot. That spaciousness is important to the general rural character of the area due to the prominent siting of the house at a junction on the edge of the village, and the modest scale and height of the existing outbuilding contributes to this spacious and unassuming appearance of the plot.
4. At the time of my site visit work was being undertaken at the house pursuant to a planning permission for extensions to the property (ref. SDNP/19/05958/HOUS). The outbuilding that is proposed to be demolished as part of the current appeal was still in existence.
5. Policy SD31 of the South Downs Local Plan (2019) allows for extensions to existing dwellings and also the provision of annexes and outbuildings. Criterion 1a) of this Policy states that such development must not increase the floorspace of the existing dwelling by more than approximately 30% unless there are exceptional circumstances. I am informed the term 'existing dwelling' means that existing on 18 December 2002.

6. The local planning authority inform me that, when considering SDNP/19/05958/HOUS, there was uncertainty as to the age of the existing outbuilding on the site and as a consequence they could not use the gross internal area (GIA) of the house towards any comparison for the current proposal. They further state that two areas shown as 'garden stores' on the submitted drawings of the existing outbuilding were not included in any GIA measurement, since as to include such stores would not be consistent with RICS guidance on the measurement of GIA. Having taken these matters into account, the local planning authority considered the proposed replacement outbuilding to exceed the 30% guidance in Policy SD31.
7. The appellant has provided sound evidence showing that the existing outbuilding dates from 1978. They also say the 'garden stores' form part of the existing outbuilding and should be included in calculations of floorspace. I viewed these at my site visit and I concur those areas are congruent with the remainder of the outbuilding, forming part of that building, and so it is reasonable to include them within the 'existing' floorspace figure.
8. Based on what I have read and seen I am therefore minded to agree with the appellant's figures on existing floorspace at the property and the proposed floorspace: both as permitted by SDNP/19/05958/HOUS and in the current appeal. This shows the increase in GIA would be below 30% and so would not conflict with Criterion 1a) of Policy SD31.
9. Policy SD31 continues to set out other criteria to be satisfied in any proposed development for an annexe or outbuilding. This includes 1b), which requires any proposal to respect the established character of the local area. The proposed outbuilding would be sited in the same position as the existing outbuilding, and would be of similar length, but it would be of a scale far greater in its presence.
10. The existing workshop and stores in the building are staggered back from the garage element, which significantly reduces the visual presence of the building. The low ridge height and unassuming timber appearance further diminishes any visual presence. The proposed building would not have such a staggered and varied building line which, together with the considerable increase in ridge height over the existing, would substantially increase the visual impact in the area.
11. The domestic appearance of the design would compound this increased presence. The southern elevation is highly glazed, with large windows over the majority of the building, bi-fold doors and front door, and a porch. These all would give an impression of a large building that competes in scale, design and perceived function to the main house, which would diminish the spacious character of the plot and be unduly intrusive to the village and wider landscape.
12. Policy SD31 further requires any proposals for annexes to demonstrate their functional and physical dependency on the host dwelling, and that outbuildings to demonstrate they are required for purposes incidental to the use of the host dwelling. I acknowledge that the positioning and orientation of the proposed outbuilding looks towards the existing dwelling. However, the use of the building is entirely given over to bedrooms and living area, with any other incidental use omitted; the existing outbuilding contains a variety of incidental uses typical for a large detached house with a garden of this size. This indicates

that the sole purpose of the building would be for living accommodation, with the design of the building emphasizing this, and so there is both no clear functional and physical dependency on the host dwelling, nor any clear incidental use to the large, extended house.

13. The proposed development therefore fails to satisfy the requirements of Policy SD31. The scale, height and design of the proposal would also conflict with Policies SD1, SD4, SD5, SD7 and SD25 which, amongst other matters, seeks to ensure all new development is of a high standard of design and respects the landscape character of the National Park. The proposal would have a harmful effect of the proposed development on the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park. Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework says that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. This adds further weight against the proposed development.
14. I saw at my site visit that a number of other houses in the village have outbuildings. However, none are of such great a size or visual presence to unacceptably impose upon the landscape. My conclusions in respect of this appeal remain the same, and the appeal is dismissed accordingly.

C J Leigh

INSPECTOR