The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 February 2021

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W1715/W/20/3261854
Bellevue House, High Street, Old Bursledon, Hampshire SO31 8DJ

- 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 and Mrs Mark Barney against the decision of Eastleigh Borough Council.
- The application Ref F/20/87702, dated 21 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 September 2020.
- The development proposed is construction of two-storey 4-bedroom dwelling and detached double garage following the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the appeal form and the decision notice, since it more accurately and succinctly describes the appeal scheme than the description on the application form.

3. The name of the property in the appeal site address above is taken from the appeal form. It differs from that on the application form and decision notice, which describe the property as "Drove House". The appellants have confirmed that the change in name occurred after the submission of the planning application and prior to its determination.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Old Bursledon Conservation Area (OBCA) and Special Policy Area (OBSPA).

Reasons

5. The site is located to the south of Bursledon, within designated open countryside as defined in the *Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001–2011)* (2006) (the LPR). It also lies within the OBCA and OBSPA.

6. The appeal property is sited to the rear of houses known as the Old Post Office and Turnstones on the south side of High Street, and at a lower ground level than the road. Vehicular access is from High Street, and there is a detached double garage to the front of the house. There is residential built development on both sides of High Street. On the southern side this is broken up by a green

undeveloped gap adjacent to the appeal site, which includes a public viewpoint providing views towards the River Hamble.

7. Section 72(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* as amended (the Act) requires that, with respect to development affecting 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". Paragraph 193 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) sets out 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.

8. The significance of the OBCA is set out in the *Old Bursledon Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals Supplementary Planning Document* (2012) (the OBCAAMP). The appeal site lies within Character Zone 7 – High Street, which is described as the centre of the conservation area and historic centre of the village. The OBCAAMP confirms that most houses within the conservation area are two-storey, pitched roof with chimneys and red/brown clay tiles or natural slates, brick built with tile hanging, weatherboarding and white painted timber windows. Except for sections of High Street, where there are groups of houses, houses tend to be set in extensive garden landscapes.

9. The OBCAAMP notes that plots are often generous in proportion to the buildings within them, and confirms that the local planning authority will seek to retain the sense of space and openness within plots which makes a vital contribution to the character of the conservation area.

10. There is considerable geographical overlap between the OBCA and the OBSPA, which was designated under the LPR, and is described as an area of low density housing, woodland, open fields and salt marshes adjacent to the River Hamble. LPR Policy 179.LB seeks to protect its special loose-knit character.

11. The appeal property is a late 20th century detached dwelling, comprising a traditional design with brick and tile hanging walls under a tiled pitched and hipped roof, incorporating pitched roof dormers and feature brick chimneys, and other elements of architectural interest including window headers and cills, decorative roof tiles, and a variety of building heights and roof forms. The property is set within extensive landscaped grounds which drop down in height towards the railway line at the rear of the site, and open land and the River Hamble beyond that.

12. The building is not of any special architectural merit which would warrant refusing its replacement in principle within the OBCA. However, it is not harmful to the character and appearance of the OBCA. The scale, height, design and materials of the building are not at odds with the aforementioned dwelling-types typical of the OBCA. Extensions and a detached garage are subservient in scale and height to the main building. Whilst it is visible in views from the public realm, including from High Street and School Road, its combined siting, height, massing, roof form, design and materials are such that the building and its garage sit discretely on the site and do not appear unduly prominent in wider views of the appeal site and its surroundings, including from the identified important viewpoint from High Street towards the river. Accordingly, the appeal property and its grounds exhibit characteristics which are intrinsic to the rural and loose-knit character of the OBCA and OBSPA.

13. Zone 7 is identified as the most densely populated part of the OBCA. The OBCAAMP notes that the mature backcloth of trees and the range of planting provide a green setting that enhances the built form. It acknowledges that the land slopes to the south and is highly enclosed by houses, hedgerows and trees, except for the dramatic gap in High Street opposite Greyladyes, where long views of the river and its estuary are to be had, and can be enjoyed from a new viewpoint provided for this purpose. This is identified as an important view and vista within the OBCAAMP, and its maintenance is an identified objective within the document.

14. The OBCAAMP also confirms that the space between buildings is an important element in maintaining visual separation between properties and preventing the urbanising effect of large expanses of brick wall, inappropriate for the rural village character. This is identified as being particularly significant along the south side of High Street between The Old Post Office and Primrose Cottage, where buildings are already in close proximity. In this respect, future development is required to carefully consider the impact on this spacing and should not reduce it.

15. The OBCAAMP states that there is a range of building sizes, with a number of small properties still remaining that make an important contribution to both the character and vitality of the area and that there are also a number of properties that have expanded in size over time, to create large dwellings, not always successfully.

16. Whilst maintaining a similar maximum building width and incorporating a lower maximum height and depth to that of the existing dwelling, and proposing a maximum of two storeys instead of the existing three, the replacement building would nonetheless result in a substantial increase in building size above that of the existing property. The existing building has an idented footprint, and includes single storey projections. The proposal would introduce a consistent two storey height across a notably larger building footprint, with consistent building eaves and ridge heights. This would culminate in a replacement building of a much larger bulk and massing than that of the existing, particularly at its western end.

17. As a result, notwithstanding the change from rendered walls to a red brick finish, and, having regard to the appellants amended Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), I find, following my site inspection, that the proposed larger building would have a noticeably more visually prominent appearance within some key public views from within the conservation area than the existing building.

18. In particular, the replacement building would result in additional built development being visually prominent within views towards the river and estuary from High Street to the north of the site, including from the formal public viewing area identified as a key viewpoint in the OBCAAMP, and when travelling west along High Street. It would also be more prominent in views towards the south when approaching High Street from a more elevated position in School Road. Having regard to the impact on these views, the proposed repositioning of the replacement building further to the northeast than the existing would heighten the visual impact associated with the increased building size.

19. The replacement building would also be more visible in views from the western part of High Street, most notably when looking between 'Turnstones' and 'Crableck', from where it would impact on the backdrop of development behind these properties, introducing a greater element of built development, and being perceived as eroding the typically spacious form of development of the area.

20. As such, I find that the increased building scale, massing and size, in conjunction with its repositioning on the site would result in an adverse physical and visual urbanising impact on this part of this part of the countryside, to the detriment of the significance and character and appearance of this part of the OBCA and the open and spacious character of the OBSPA. This would not be mitigated by the removal of any glint associated with the existing rear elevation glazing. This glazing is not readily apparent in the affected key public views towards the site from the north, and, in any event, a large proportion of the proposed front and rear elevations of the new building would comprise glazing.

21. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the OBCA, harming its significance as a heritage asset, and would harm the character of the OBSPA. As such, the proposal would not accord with Saved Policies 8.CO, 59.BE, 169.LB, 170.LB and 179.LB of the LPR, draft Policies DM1, DM12, DM28 and BU9 of the *Emerging Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036)* (the BLP) and the OBCAAMP. These policies and guidance, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, respect and enhance the character of the OBSPA, are appropriate in mass, scale and siting in relation to adjoining spaces and views, and that replacement dwellings in the countryside do not have a greater impact physically or visually on the character and appearance of its immediate surroundings or on the countryside in general, than the existing dwelling.

22. Having regard to the above, I have afforded moderate weight to emerging Policy BU9, having regard to the advanced stage of preparation of the BLP, the confirmation by the Council that the hearings Inspector did not request any changes to this policy, and the Council's resolution to progress the examination on the basis of the main modifications contained within the Inspector's letter and action points.

23. For similar reasons, the proposed development would also be contrary to Policies of the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment as set out in Chapter 16.

24. In terms of the advice in Paragraph 196 of the Framework, the harm to the conservation area would be no greater than "less than substantial". Less than substantial harm does not equate to less than substantial planning objection, and the Framework sets out the need to address the "less than substantial harm" against the public benefits of the scheme.

25. Public benefits would arise from the proposed removal of vegetation within the central and southern parts of the site to improve views of the river estuary from public views from parts of High Street, in accordance with one of the objectives of the OBCAAMP. This weighs modestly in favour of the proposal, taking into account that it would involve the removal of soft landscaping, which also positively contributes to the rural character of the OBCA. There would also

be limited economic benefits arising from the construction of the replacement dwelling. 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 OBCA.

Other Matters

26. Whilst the proposal would incorporate a high standard of design and a Georgian-style architecture which would be appropriate for the conservation area, this does not outweigh my concerns in respect of the physical and visual impact of the increased building size on the character and appearance of the area. I am not persuaded that a reduction in building size would necessarily result in a poor-quality design which would be inappropriate within the conservation area.

27. The appellants have drawn my attention to pre-application advice received from the Council, on the basis of which amendments were made to the scheme, prior to the submission of the planning application, including a reduction in dwelling scale, and a change to the building orientation. Notwithstanding this, I am not bound by the advice given by the Council prior to the submission of the planning application and it does not alter or outweigh my conclusion on the main issue.

28. The appellants have referred to planning permission which was granted for extensions to Greylaydes Cottage in 2011. However, I must determine this appeal having regard to the merits of the appeal scheme before me and the particular circumstances of the appeal site. Also, in so doing, I am not bound by the advice of the Council's Heritage Consultant, who has raised no objection to the proposal.

29. Whilst I have noted the appellants' desire for a better building layout and improved thermal properties, these matters to do not justify or outweigh the harm I have found in respect of the main issue.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR