



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 June 2021

by Martin Chandler BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/M1710/W/21/3270898

16B The Green, Rowlands Castle, Hants PO9 6BN

- 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 Lee Slark against the decision of East Hampshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 58572/002, dated 7 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 28 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is conversion of roof space with side gable and front and rear dormers.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Lee Slark against the decision of East Hampshire District Council. This matter is the subject of a separate decision.

Procedural Matter

3. It is apparent that the work described in the banner heading above has already taken place. However, this has had no bearing on my assessment of the appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Rowlands Castle Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
6. The appeal site is located within the Rowlands Castle Conservation Area (CA). Based on the evidence before me, much of the significance of the CA derives from The Green, and the buildings which front onto it and combine to create an attractive historic village centre. These buildings present a varied street scene with an interesting roofscape that includes the distinct prevalence of forward-facing dormer windows. However, despite the visual interest, there is a consistency within the roofscape with buildings often having a balanced and generally symmetrical form at roof level.

7. The appeal building fronts onto The Green and as a consequence, it is a prominent and important building within the street. It forms one half of a pair of semi-detached dwellings that originally would have had a hipped roof. As identified above, the roofscape of the buildings which front The Green makes an important contribution to the significance of the CA, and although dormer windows are apparent, consistency and balance within the roof forms are also dominant characteristics. The gable conversion would fundamentally alter the symmetry and balance of the roof form. In doing this, it would also increase the bulk of the existing building, thereby drawing increased prominence to the altered structure. Due to the asymmetric roof form that would be created, I find that this element of the proposal would be harmful to the balance and consistency of the roofscape that contributes so positively to the character and appearance of the CA. Accordingly, it would fail to meet the requirements of the Act.
8. Based on the evidence before me, permission exists for dormer windows to the front and rear of the property. Moreover, the evidence suggests that the difference between the proposed dormer windows and those which have consent is marginal. I note the comment about the form of the actual windows that are proposed. However, the location, form, and bulk are broadly comparable and as a consequence, I do not find the effect on the CA to be meaningfully different.
9. My attention has also been drawn to a similar roof form at 55a The Green. This is a detached building located further towards the western end of The Green. It is set back from the road, as well as being set back beyond its neighbouring buildings. Accordingly, in my judgement, the building occupies a demonstrably less significant and prominent location within the CA. Although the asymmetric roof form is apparent, due to its substantially less conspicuous siting, I do not find that its presence alters my concerns identified above. I also note the reference to a proposal at 3 Coldharbour Lane but I am satisfied that this proposal is materially different to that which is before me. It is also substantially removed geographically from the appeal site. Accordingly, that development is not relevant to my assessment of the appeal before me.
10. The harm to the CA that would be caused by the proposal would be less than substantial. Accordingly, Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the harm to be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal. In this regard, the proposal would likely improve the accommodation provided within the building, thereby resulting in a very small improvement to the housing stock within the district. However, the scale of the proposal ensures that I only give very limited weight to this matter. Paragraph 193 of the Framework requires that great weight should be given to the conservation of a CA, and accordingly, I am entirely satisfied that the public benefit of the proposal would not outweigh the harm to the CA that I have identified above.
11. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the CA. It would therefore fail to comply with Policies CP29 and CP30 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (2014), and Policies HE2 and HE5 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review (2006). Taken together, these policies seek development which respects character, identity, and context, and which preserves or enhances the character and appearance of Conservation Areas.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons identified above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Chandler

INSPECTOR