



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 July 2021

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/W/21/3271229

Rectory Farmhouse, Ifield Street, Crawley RH11 0NN

- 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 Jo and Trevor S Strutt against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2021/0022/FUL, dated 12 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as demolition of existing single storey side projection with replacement proposed 2 storey and part single storey side extension. Proposed demolition of existing rear/side facing conservatory style structure with replacement single storey rear/side extension. Proposed rear storm porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for, demolition of existing single storey side projection with replacement proposed 2 storey and part single storey side extension. Proposed demolition of existing rear/side facing conservatory style structure with replacement single storey rear/side extension. Proposed rear storm porch, at Rectory Farmhouse, Ifield Street, Crawley RH11 0NN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref CR/2021/0022/FUL, dated 12 January 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 242-04 Rev. D; 242-05 Rev. D; 242-06 Rev. D.
 - 3) The colour, texture and finishes of the materials used for external facing and roofing of the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing dwelling.

Procedural matters

2. During the course of the appeal a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published. The parties were given the opportunity to comment, and I have taken any comments into account in determining the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on heritage assets including, whether it would conserve the significance of a non-designated heritage asset; whether it would preserve the setting of a Grade I listed building, and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Ifield Village Conservation Area (the Conservation Area).

Reasons

4. Rectory Farmhouse is a locally listed building. As such, and as defined by the Framework, it is a non-designated heritage asset. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal, the significance of the building resides in its reasonably intact mid-C19th design, detailing, and composition.
5. The Council has raised no objection to the proposed 2 storey and part single storey side extension. Here the Council's objection relates to the replacement of the existing 'conservatory style structure' and to the proposed porch.
6. The conservatory style structure is a crudely constructed, modern, flat felt-roofed addition which occupies the southwest corner of the building footprint. It is positioned between 2 other single storey elements which each adjoin the historic core of the dwelling, and which feature pitched and hipped roofs respectively. Whilst the existing structure therefore lacks any intrinsic merit, its form is poorly integrated with that of adjoining elements, and thus visually incongruous.
7. The replacement structure would be covered by a pitched roof, that would be run in line with that covering the adjoining single storey element. Unlike at present, its form would therefore be directly integrated, and a significant visual improvement would be achieved. Though the proposed roof would not directly harmonise with the hipped roof of the second adjoining element, neither does the pitched roof form which would effectively be extended. In this regard the 2 elements would remain distinct.
8. Given that existing roofs on the building are almost all hipped, the Council has raised concern over use of a gable end on the replacement structure. The gable end would however simply be a displaced feature of the existing roof whose line would be extended.
9. Further concern has been raised in relation to detailing of the gable. This is presumably given the proposal to incorporate glazing within it, rather than due to omission of the verge treatment seen on the existing gable. Indeed, for reasons unclear, incorporation of the latter appears to have drawn objection previously.
10. The use of glazing within the gable would be a clearly modern feature. So too would the bi-fold glazed panels below. Indeed, considered as a whole, the proposed glazing would relate no better to the style or proportion of glazing in the historic core of the building than does the glazing in the existing structure. This appears to be the reason that the Council favours a replacement structure of more distinct design than that proposed. The benefit of integrating the form of the building would indeed be undermined by continued use of a modern glazing format. Nonetheless, in this case it would not be sufficient to confuse appreciation of the character or significance of the historic core of the building, and a net enhancement would be achieved overall.

11. The proposed roof would see an existing valley gutter extended. In this regard there is no reason to believe that a properly constructed and maintained valley gutter would cause any harm, either in itself, or in relation to the function of the existing gutter.
12. The proposed porch would replace an existing porch of poor quality, utilising a design similar to that of the existing front porch. Though this would increase the overall height and prominence of the porch within the rear elevation, its proportions and design would be far more harmonious than the existing. In this regard, though attention has been drawn to the 'elevated' position of the porch, this is no more than a product of ground levels, both as they exist, and as they are shown, cut away, on the proposed elevation drawing. The porch would otherwise appear correctly positioned within the elevation.
13. The porch would feature a hipped rather than pent roof, which would abut the lower section of a projecting chimney stack, as does the pent roof of the existing porch. The shape of the latter to some extent reflects that of the sloping sides of the stack, and drains to the front. The same would not be true of the proposed roof given that a modest valley would be created, and a minor juxtaposition of differing forms would arise. However, in neither regard would this be sufficient to appear incongruous given the otherwise harmonious design proposed. Again, a net enhancement would be achieved. For this and the above reasons I find that the significance of the non-designated heritage asset would be conserved.
14. The site lies adjacent to the Parish Church of St Margaret, which is a Grade I listed building, and thus a designated heritage asset of the highest significance. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal the significance of the listed building resides in its substantially medieval fabric and design, and its strong visual and physical presence, which is partly a product of its substantial tower.
15. The Council has not identified any historic connection between the appeal site and the church, or any other way in which the site contributes to its significance. None is otherwise apparent. The Council has also failed to explain why the scheme would harm the significance of the church, or its appreciation.
16. Given that the front elevation of Rectory Farmhouse faces towards the church a high level of intervisibility would exist were intervening vegetation were to be removed. Even were this to occur however, the specific elements of the scheme to which the Council has raised an objection would not be visible. I have in any case found that they would be acceptable, and indeed deliver overall enhancement viewed in relation to the appeal property itself. To the extent that it is or could be possible to view these elements against a backdrop provided by the church, or within a panorama from within the wider churchyard, the ability to appreciate the significance of the church would not therefore be harmed. That being so, I am satisfied that the development would have a neutral effect, and that the setting of the listed building would thus be preserved.
17. The site also lies within the Conservation Area. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal the significance of the Conservation Area resides in the historic layout of the village, and the collection and interrelationship of historic buildings and spaces that it contains. As Rectory Farmhouse is one such historic building, and furthermore given its identification as a non-designated heritage asset, it

makes a clearly positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area.

18. In view of my findings above, the development would not have any adverse effect on the contribution that Rectory Farmhouse makes to the significance of the Conservation Area, viewed either in its own right, or in relation to the church. I am therefore satisfied that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved.
19. For the reasons set out above the development would have an acceptable effect on heritage assets, both designated and non-designated. It would therefore comply with Policy CH12 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015 – 2030 (the LP) which seeks to ensure that the key features or significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets are not lost as a result of development; Policy CH13 of the LP, which supports statutory duties in relation to conservation areas; Policy CH16 of the LP which seeks to secure development that respects or preserves the character of locally listed buildings; Policy CH3 of the LP, which amongst other things seeks to secure high quality architectural design; and supporting guidance in the Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document 2016 and Ifield Village Conservation Area Statement 2018. Though the decision notice also referenced Policy CH2 of the LP, this relates to the broader principles of urban design and does not contain any criteria that appear to be relevant.

Conditions

20. I have imposed standard conditions setting out the time limit for commencement of the development and identifying the approved plans for sake of certainty. I have also imposed a condition requiring the external finishes and materials to match those of the existing building. This is in order to help ensure that a good level of integration is achieved, thereby helping to conserve the character of the building, and the contribution that it makes to broader character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR