



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 17 November 2021

by S Tudhope LLB (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/D/21/3275816

47 Harpsden Road, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1EE

- 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 Nicholas Gray against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P20/S4523/HH, dated 25 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as "Addition on one flat roof dormer to a loft which has been converted. The current head height means this is not a practical space. It complies with fire regulations and therefore can be classified as a bedroom but it is not a practical space. Neither as a bedroom nor as a work space".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the above heading is taken from the appeal form as, despite its length, it more concisely and accurately reflects the proposal than that given on the application form.
3. The appellant requested that, as part of my site visit, I undertake an internal inspection of the room subject of the proposed dormer, in order to appreciate the space and to view nearby roof slopes and existing dormers in the vicinity. I visited the site at the prearranged time of 10:30 on 17 November 2021. No person was present to provide access inside of the property. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that I could see sufficient from outside the site to determine the appeal.
4. The Council made its decision on the basis of amended plans. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
5. The Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in July 2021. All references to the Framework in this decision relate to the updated document.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Reading Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

7. The appeal building (No 47) is a two-storey end of terrace Victorian house, located on the east side of Harpsden Road, within the Reading Road Conservation Area (CA). In accordance with the statutory duty imposed by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
8. This part of the CA is characterised by long terraces of well detailed, modest sized houses. The buildings are notable for their group features which together present an attractive, unified architectural character. The significance of the CA appears to be largely derived from the contribution of the architectural and historic quality, character and coherence of its buildings which are predominantly 19th Century workers dwellings.
9. The CA and thus the appeal site, is covered by a 2008 Article 4 Direction. This has been imposed by the Council in order to protect the surviving architectural features and character of the CA and further highlights the importance given to the heritage asset.
10. Although altered, being host to a part single and part two storey rear extension and a loft conversion served by roof lights, No 47 has retained many of its original details. As such its authenticity and historic charm, both individually and as part of a group, contributes positively to the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and its significance as a heritage asset in relation to this appeal.
11. The end terrace position of No 47 next to the junction of Harpsden Road and Boston Road means that the side and rear of the property are highly visible in the street scene. The proposal would result in a sizeable flat roof dormer extending across much of the width of the property's rear roof slope. Although the proposal would sit well above the eaves, be stepped in from the side and marginally down from the main ridge line, thereby meeting some of the Council's adopted guidance¹ for roof extensions, its overall scale height and depth would unacceptably dominate the roofscape.
12. Despite the presence of several roof lights and a handful of dormers, the roofscapes of the host and neighbouring terraces have largely remained free from interruption. The proposed dormer would unacceptably detract from the simple and uniform lines of the roof of the appeal building and its wider terrace. Although the effect would be localised in terms of views from the street, the proposal would still be prominent and would compromise the integrity of the roof slope. The proposal would be unsympathetic to the appearance of the host building and would dilute the positive contribution it otherwise makes to the significance of the character and appearance of the CA.
13. This would not be mitigated by the existence of other dormers found within the vicinity of the site to which my attention has been drawn. From the evidence provided and from what I could see on my site visit, it was clear that these developments, including at Nos 5 and 37 Harpsden Road, No 100 Reading Road, a property close to the junction of Reading Road and Boston Road and at Greys Road, do not represent direct parallels to the appeal proposal. There are

¹ South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016, section 6, loft conversions and roof extensions

differences in terms of size and position within their roof slopes and their relation to the street scene and the CA. I therefore find that the existence of other dormers in the vicinity of the site lends very limited support to the proposal before me, which I necessarily determine on its own merits.

14. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host building and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Thus, it would conflict with Policies DES1, DES2, H20, ENV6 and ENV8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2020, Policies DSQ1 and EN5 of the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan 2015 and the technical guidance set out in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016. When considered together these policies require development to relate well to form and character and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Other Matters

15. I note the support for the proposal from the Town Council, however this does not lead me to a different overall conclusion on the main issue.
16. I note the appellant's efforts seeking pre-application advice and that they made amendments to their scheme both prior to and following submission of the application. However, I can only consider the proposal before me and have done so on its own planning merits and made my own assessment as to its impacts.

Conclusion

17. In the context of paragraph 202 of the Framework the harm caused to the heritage asset would be less than substantial. Paragraph 199 of the Framework states 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. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm, as in this case, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
18. The proposal would provide additional useable living space and would meet the needs of the appellant. I appreciate the increased demand for remote working and general demands of modern family living. There are clearly private benefits to the proposed development. However, no substantive public benefits have been put forward to weigh against the harm to the heritage asset that I have identified. This is a matter to which I give considerable importance and weight.
19. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise. Therefore, for the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

S Tudhope

INSPECTOR