



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2022

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/W/21/3282050

Flat above 49 High Street, Chobham, Woking, GU24 8AF

- 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 R Mumford of RCM Carpentry (Chobham) Ltd against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/0233/FFU, dated 22 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is addition of mezzanine floor with roof modification and addition of dormer windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. On 20 July 2021, after the Council made its decision, the Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). It is clear from the submissions that the main parties are aware of this matter. All references to the Framework within my decision shall be taken from the 2021 version.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the existing building and the Chobham Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The statutory duty set out in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.
5. The appeal site is located within the historic core of the Chobham Conservation Area (CCA) that is centred on High Street. This is a part of the CCA that is visually compact, with a high concentration of listed and locally listed buildings. Buildings in the area are broadly consistent in terms of siting, scale and materials, including the predominant use of plain clay roof tiles on prominent gabled and hipped roofs.
6. The CCA character appraisal recognises the strong influence of the 18th century reflected in many brick and stucco fronts, many disguising older timber frames. Rear aspects of the buildings that form the primary commercial frontage of High Street can be seen from various vantage points within the CCA, where the

eclectic mix of various additions and the greater variety of roof forms provide a pleasant and characterful contrast to the more polite facades fronting High Street.

7. The appeal building is recognised by the Council as a structure of local significance. Its prominent High Street elevation is seen as part of a row of three similar buildings that retain traditional joinery, prominent chimney stacks and a decorative dentil course under the eaves. The rear elevation of the building is prominent to view from the footpath that extends away from the site to the west, and comprises a mix of traditional modest hipped roof forms and later extensions, seen alongside the characterful rear roof slopes of the adjacent building to the south. Views of these roofs are enjoyed in the context of the prominent spire of the Church of St Lawrence and contribute to the character and appearance of the CCA.
8. The proposal would see the existing hipped roof at the rear of the building extended out to the side to form a half hip. It would offset this small roof by raising it at one end, however it does not currently have a full symmetrical form. The addition in height would be modest and raising it at one end would accord with the informal arrangement of roofs viewed from the footpath.
9. The proposal would also see a substantial dormer erected on the outward face of this roof. Although there are a number of other dormers in this area at the rear they are all at a lower first floor level. The proposed dormer would therefore be much more prominent than the existing dormers and would occupy almost all of the modest length of the existing roof. It would be at odds with the modest and low slung roofs of the building to the south.
10. Although it would be formed in matching materials it would appear as an incongruous addition when viewed from the footpath at the rear. From this perspective it would be seen well above the height of the other dormers, and thus not subservient, in an elevated second floor position alongside characterful rear roof slopes that are not interrupted by such extensions.
11. A second dormer would be erected on the inner roof slope, facing into a hidden valley. It is suggested that it would be possible to glimpse this structure from High Street, in the gap between the hip of the host building and the gable end of the adjacent building to the south. However, it is clear that this would be a very discreet view, and that in all other respects this dormer would be hidden from the front and back of the building. I am therefore satisfied that this element of the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the CCA.
12. I accept that the harmful impact of the proposed rear dormer would be limited to those views from the footpath at the rear. The proposal is small in scale and there are many key aspects of the CCA that the proposal would not harm. However, the harm I have found would not be limited to the appeal building in isolation but would be experienced from part of the CCA and would harm the appearance of a group of historic buildings that contribute to the area's character. I am therefore of the view that the character and appearance of the CCA would not be preserved.
13. In terms of the Framework, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph

202 of the Framework establishes that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

14. The proposal would increase the living accommodation of the existing flat, which is currently very small. It would equip the flat with a separate room for sleeping. I am satisfied that this would give the dwelling a basic level of functionality that would improve the contribution it makes to the adequacy of local housing stock and would thus be a public benefit. However, the dwelling would still have an awkward layout, with a very small bathroom, a Kitchen and Dining area that would be heavily constrained by the addition of the stair, and a small bedroom space with restricted headroom. Therefore, the weight I give this as a public benefit is limited by these factors.
15. I give the harm I have identified considerable importance and weight. Indeed, paragraph 199 of the Framework establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset. In this context I find that the benefits of the proposal would not be sufficient to outweigh the degree of harm identified.
16. In summary, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the existing building and would fail to meet the requirements of the LBCA as it would not preserve the character or appearance of the CCA. It would be contrary to Policies DM9 and DM17 of the Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2011-2028, which together seek to ensure that development proposals respect and enhance historic character and promote the conservation and enhancement of a heritage asset. The proposal would also be contrary to the design advice relating to dormer extensions set out at Principle 10.5 of the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017.

Conclusion

17. In conclusion, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR