



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 July 2022

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/22/3291379

Mill Mere, Staceys Farm Road, Elstead, Godalming GU8 6EN

- 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 C White against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2021/01534, dated 1 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of front/side extensions to dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the setting of the Elstead Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Stacey's Farm Road is a side road, which runs parallel with Thursley Road, one of the main roads running through Elstead. The roads are separated by a grass verge planted with tall trees and bushes, which limits views of the houses along Stacey's Farm Road from Thursley Road.
4. Stacey's Farm Road is made up of a mixture of 1 and 2 storey houses, which vary in their form and scale but are more consistent in their materials. They are set back from the road on large, landscaped plots.
5. The appeal property is one of the larger houses, located at the eastern entrance to Stacey's Farm Road. The appeal site slopes upwards away from the road meaning the house sits above the front boundary treatment, which currently consists of a stone wall with hedging behind. Given its size and position at the entrance of the road, it can therefore be seen from Thursley Road and is fairly prominent in the street scene.
6. The boundary of Elstead Conservation Area (ECA) runs along the southern edge of Thursley Road and up the eastern boundary of the appeal site. It includes the entrance to Stacey's Farm Road but not the road itself or any of the properties along it, including the appeal property. Opposite the entrance and appeal property, on the northern side of Thursley Road, are some historic buildings that form part of the ECA.
7. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. However, this is

with respect to any buildings or other land within a conservation area and therefore is not applicable in this case given that the appeal site lies outside the ECA. Nevertheless, policies HA1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (Part 1): Strategic Policies and Sites 2018 (Part 1 LP 2018) and HE8 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 (LP 2002) seek to conserve or enhance all heritage assets including their settings. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which explains that the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence but also from its setting.

8. The appellant has not disputed the assertion that the significance of the ECA relates to the compact core of the village, set around a central green, which is enclosed by both residential dwellings and small units of commercial use. The buildings are varied in age and scale, and most are two storeys with traditional building styles and materials throughout.
9. Despite its set back and the screening provided by soft landscaping, the appeal property is clearly visible from within the ECA when moving away from the village centre along Thursley Road and can be seen in combination with the historic buildings on the opposite side of Thursley Road. Its current two-storey form and traditional style and materials add positively to the setting of the ECA.
10. The proposed development would increase the scale and mass of the existing house significantly. The form and appearance of the appeal property would change from two storeys to four. Therefore, despite having similar features and materials to the existing house, the size and scale of the extensions would not appear as a subservient addition but rather dominate the existing house. In coming to this view, I have taken account that the fourth floor would be within the existing roof space and roof of the proposed front extension.
11. It may be that, due to the slope of the appeal site and further planting, much of the proposed basement level and retaining walls would not be readily visible from the street. However, part of the front extension, including the basement and rooms within the roof, would nevertheless be visible through the existing vehicle access. The proposed front addition would also finish much closer to the road than the existing house and would be prominent in the street scene and the setting of the ECA. Its three-storey form, with rooms in the roof, would be out of character with the houses in the surrounding area and at odds with the significance of the ECA. As a result, it would appear incongruous in the street scene and would harm the setting of the ECA and thus its significance. While the guidance in the Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2010 (SPD) allows for some flexibility, in this case, I have found the proposal would be visually prominent and intrusive within the street scene due, in part, to the proposed front extension projecting significantly further than the 2 metres advised in the SPD. This would lead to harm despite the dwelling being set back and partially screened by vegetation.
12. I would quantify the extent of the harm to the ECA as being less than substantial when considered in the context of the Framework. I note that the benefits for the proposed development are private, relating to an increase in accommodation. Given this, and that the Framework places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets, I find that there would be little public benefit to outweigh the identified harm.

13. Accordingly, I find the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, as well as the setting and significance of the ECA. As such, it would conflict with policies HA1 and TD1 of the Part 1 LP 2018 and policies HE8, D1 and D4 of LP 2002. Amongst other aspects, these seek to conserve the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, and ensure high quality design that protects the character and appearance of the borough. The proposal would also be inconsistent with the Residential Extensions SPD in relation to paragraph 9.9.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

14. With regard to the above, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan, read as a whole. I recognise that the appeal proposal would provide additional accommodation for the appellant. It has also been put to me that the proposed development would make use of the change in levels and the Council has not raised concerns in relation to the living conditions of adjoining occupiers, parking, the Wealden Heaths designated nature conservation sites, ancient woodland, and biodiversity. However, these matters neither outweigh the harm I have identified nor provide justification for development that conflicts with the development plan. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR