
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2023

by Emma Worley BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/22/3304702

2 Bridge Street, Godalming GU7 1HY

- 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 Charles Draycott on behalf of Centurion Capital Ltd against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2021/02839, dated 22 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'roof extension to create a new single dwelling in the roof space of an existing building, together with alterations to the existing stair'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The address on both the planning application and appeal forms is 2 Bridge Street. This differs from the Decision Notice, which states 1-2 Bridge Street. For clarity, the appeal site comprises both 1 and 2 Bridge Street.
3. Subsequent to its submission of evidence, the Council has brought to my attention the adoption of its Climate Change and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (adopted October 2022) and its 5 Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement published November 2022, which indicates a supply of 4.9 years. The appellant has been given the opportunity to comment on these documents.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Godalming Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a 4 storey, pitched roof building of a traditional style and appearance constructed in Bargate stone. It is orientated to front Bridge Street with the ground floor in commercial use and the floors above being used for residential purposes. The proposal, which includes dormers to the front and rear, would create an additional one bedroom flat within the roofspace of the building.

6. The site lies in the CA which covers Godalming town centre. The significance of the CA is derived from its high concentration of historic buildings of varying ages and architectural interest. The area includes compact, frontage development arranged along narrow streets which provides a strong sense of enclosure. Development to the rear includes yards behind the frontage buildings, access to which is via alleyways between the buildings. At 4 storeys high the appeal property is one of the taller buildings within the CA and due to its height is notably visually prominent in views along Bridge Street towards High Street. The parties agree that the host building is of some historic and architectural interest and is a positive element within the context of the site and the CA as a whole. Despite the alterations to the rear the building largely retains its appearance as an attractive traditional commercial building which reflects the evolution of the town centre.
7. The proposed dormers to both the front and rear elevations would be lower in height than the ridgeline of the existing building. In terms of the number and siting, the proposed individual dormers to the front would reflect the rhythm of the window openings in the building below and would be set in from the side gables of the building. The proposed rear dormer and enclosed balcony would be a more substantial addition to the roof which would stretch along almost the entire length of the rear roof slope and would comprise a large area of glazing.
8. Due to the shallowness of the roof pitch of the existing building, the design of the proposed dormers to both the front and rear is such that they would have substantial cheeks. This would contribute to their overall bulk and prominence, resulting in a conspicuous projection from the roof slope to both the front and rear, particularly in views of the side elevation of the building. As a consequence, the proposal would fail to relate well to the overall roof form.
9. Moreover, the proposed additions to the roof would significantly alter the shape of the roof of the building which would detract from its simple form. While the proposed front dormers would not be particularly imposing in close up views of the front elevation of the building due to the narrowness of Bridge Street, they would, together with the proposed rear dormer, be visible in longer distance views towards the appeal site. This would include views of the rear of the building from Flambard Way, where it would be visible through the entrance to the neighbouring service yard. In such views the rear dormer, as a consequence of its scale and design, would give the appearance of a tall, flat roof building.
10. The proposed additions would be particularly apparent in views along Bridge Street towards the prominent side elevation of the building, where as a consequence of the design and scale, the proposed dormers would appear as discordant features in relation to the existing building. Furthermore, due to the height of the existing building, the additions to the roof would be visually prominent in the wider street scene and also the skyline of the built form.
11. In light of the above considerations, I conclude that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the host property and would harm the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, it would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA and would undermine its significance as a designated heritage asset. In finding harm, this is something to which I have given considerable importance and weight to. However, the harm that would arise would be localised and therefore the impact on the CA as

a whole, is less than substantial in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

12. In accordance with advice in the Framework, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, I will consider this matter later.
13. The proposal would therefore fail to adhere to Policy TD1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (Part 1) 2018 (LPP1) and Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 (WBLP) which together seek to secure high quality design that does not result in material detriment to the environment. The proposal would also conflict with LPP1 Policy HA1, which seeks to ensure that the significance of heritage assets in the borough is conserved or enhanced and Policy HE8 of the WBLP which sets out that the Council will seek to preserve or enhance the character of conservation areas by, among other things, requiring a high standard for any new development within or adjoining them.
14. The proposal would also conflict with Policy GOD5 of the Godalming & Farncombe Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2032 in so far as it requires development to be sympathetic to the scale, mass, height and form of neighbouring properties, having regard to the prevailing roofline, as well as the aims of the Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2010 which sets out that a loft conversion should not rely on dormer windows to give necessary headroom, particularly where the proposal would result in an unsympathetic addition.

Other Matters

15. The proposal would make use of a previously developed site in an existing built-up area to provide an additional residential unit which would contribute to the Council's housing supply targets, which the Framework indicates should be given substantial weight. The location of the site is such that future occupiers of the development would benefit from a high degree of accessibility to a range of amenities and services. I note the appellant's suggestion that the proposal would meet local housing need for smaller units in a town centre location. However, I have not been presented with any substantive evidence to demonstrate an overriding need for smaller units in the borough or that this need cannot be met elsewhere. Furthermore, given the scale of the development, for a single unit, any such benefit would be limited.
16. My attention has been drawn to a number of examples of flat roof extensions to the rear of nearby buildings, some of which are of a substantial scale. These are functional additions of their time, and in the main are more discretely positioned in less prominent positions to the rear of buildings than the appeal proposal. As such, they have a different effect on both the host building and the character and appearance of the area to that proposed and do not justify the harm I have identified.
17. At my site visit it was evident that dormer windows, including those of a flat roof design, are not an unusual feature on buildings within the CA. As such, the proposed additions to the roof would not be entirely peculiar to the area. However, these examples are not directly comparable, given the visual

prominence of the appeal property, and in any event each case must be considered on its own merits.

18. Whilst it is common ground that the proposal would not harm the living conditions of the neighbouring properties, the absence of harm is a neutral factor. The parties also agree that the proposal would provide adequately sized rooms in terms of the Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (March 2015). While I note the Council's concerns, I have not been presented with any substantive evidence to demonstrate that the internal layout of the accommodation is such that it would reduce the amount of useable space.
19. In accordance with the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (October 2022) the appellant has submitted a completed Climate Change and Sustainability Checklist which is required to demonstrate that measures have been considered to reduce energy consumption and enhance climate resilience. Given my findings in relation to the main issue this information is not a determining factor in the appeal.

Planning balance

20. Paragraph 202 of the Framework indicates that the less than substantial harm to the heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In accordance with paragraph 199 of the Framework, I give great weight to the assets' conservation. While public benefits would arise in terms of the delivery of a market housing unit, the contribution of one unit to housing supply in the borough would be limited.
21. Furthermore, for the reasons set out above I have found that the proposal would harm the appearance of the host building and would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA as a designated heritage asset. It therefore follows that the proposal would not offer any public benefits in terms of either preserving the history of the site or in relation to the evolution of the building or the area.
22. As such, I conclude that the public benefits of the appeal scheme are of no more than limited weight and would not outweigh the harm I have identified. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with the aims and objectives of the Framework in respect of the historic environment.
23. I note the Council's updated housing supply position which indicates it can demonstrate 4.9 years supply. Whilst I note this is an increase to that indicated previously, nevertheless, it is not able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites. In this scenario, paragraph 11 of the Framework indicates that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or where there are specific policies in the Framework which indicate that development should be restricted, including policies that protect heritage assets of particular importance.
24. I have found that the public benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage assets and, therefore, paragraph 202 of the Framework provides a clear reason for refusing the development. As

such, the proposal does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined at paragraph 11 of the Framework.

Conclusion

25. The proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. Material considerations have not been shown to carry sufficient weight to indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

Emma Worley

INSPECTOR