



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2023

by Ian McHugh DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/D/22/3307574

Woodhatch, Cricket Hill Lane, Yateley, GU46 6BB

- 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 Mrs Sarah Rogers against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01045/HOU, dated 11 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a first-floor side extension to link house to annexe.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the development stated in the banner heading is taken from the planning application form and the Council's decision notice. It refers to a first-floor extension. However, it is clear when looking at the submitted plans that the property would be largely extended on the ground floor. I have determined the appeal on the basis that the proposal is for a part first floor and ground floor extension to link the house with the annexe.
3. When issued, the Council's decision notice contained a reason for refusal stating that the planning application did not contain sufficient information to enable the Council to assess the effect of the proposal on biodiversity. In response to this, the appellant has submitted a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA). The Council's views were sought and it has been confirmed by the Council's Biodiversity Officer that the findings of the PRA are agreed and there is now no objection on the grounds of biodiversity. I have no reason to disagree with this view and, therefore, there is no need to consider this matter any further.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Cricket Green Conservation Area (CA), a designated heritage asset.

Reasons

5. Woodhatch is a detached dwelling, which is situated within a small row of properties facing Cricket Hill Lane. A separate detached building (the annexe) sits to one side of the dwelling. The annexe is required for an elderly resident.

The site is within the CA which, in the vicinity of the appeal site, is characterised by its semi-rural location set against a verdant backdrop of woodland. The Council's Conservation Area Character Appraisal shows the appeal property to be located within the Reading Road and Cricket Hill Lane Character Area. It refers to it having a more rural character due to the mature trees and ponds, which mainly lie to the east and south. I note that the property is not listed, nor is it considered to be a particularly significant building within the CA.

6. At my site visit I observed that existing gaps between buildings provide views through to the woodland and help to break up the mass and visual impact of built development. I consider that these gaps, of which the space between the appeal dwelling and its annexe is one of the widest along this stretch of Cricket Hill Lane, are a distinctive and positive feature that contribute to the significance of the CA.
7. The proposal is to construct an extension that would link the existing dwelling to the detached annexe building. The extension would provide dry access between the two buildings and would contain a hallway/staircase area on the ground floor with an extended bedroom, within the existing main house, on the first floor.
8. Policy GEN1 of the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 (LP) and Policies NBE8 and NBE9 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032 seek, amongst other things, to ensure that new development is in character with the area, is of high quality design and conserves or enhances heritage assets. Policies YDFNP4 and YDFNP6 of the Yateley, Derby Green and Frogmore Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2032 contain similar provisions. These policies accord with Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (The Framework).
9. Although the proposed extension would be relatively small and its visual impact would be partly mitigated by it being at a lower level than the highway, it would close the existing gap between the main dwelling and the annexe. The elongated form and overall mass of the extended dwelling would appear out of context with the existing layout and form of development, notwithstanding the variety in the roof heights of the extension.
10. I have considered the fact that some views through to the woodland at the rear would not be affected. Although other gaps along this stretch of Cricket Hill Lane would remain, including space on the opposite site of the annexe, I consider that the existing space that would be occupied by the extension is a positive feature, which should be retained.
11. The appellant has referred to other extensions that have been constructed on properties along Cricket Hill Lane. Whilst it is not unusual for other similar developments to exist, I am not persuaded that they should act as a precedent for other proposals that are considered to be harmful.
12. For these reasons, I consider that the proposal would conflict with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and with the provisions of The Framework, as referred to above.
13. Having regard to paragraph 201 of The Framework, I consider that the harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial. I also

accept that conservation area status does not mean that development should be prohibited. I have noted that there would be benefits to the applicant by having a dry access between the dwelling and the annexe. Whilst this would undoubtedly be more convenient and assist with care, I do not find this to be a public benefit. Accordingly, this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified above.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, it is concluded that the appeal be dismissed.

Ian McHugh

INSPECTOR