



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 February 2023

by Ryan Cowley MPlan (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 MARCH 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/22/3306771

Burrows Farm, Burrows Lane, Gomshall GU5 9QE

- 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 Paul Ward against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/P/00053, dated 13 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 30 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is two storey extension.
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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 host dwelling and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. In the vicinity of the appeal site, Burrows Lane is a narrow country lane, flanked by trees and hedgerow in places. On the opposite side of the road to the appeal site, it is lined by large detached or semi-detached dwellings in generous plots, set back some distance from the highway. Immediately to the north of the appeal site there is a collection of large buildings (Kings Court) with commercial units at ground floor. There is also another detached dwelling to the south. Beyond this strip of built development are expanses of open fields. The wider area is therefore spacious and verdant and, despite scattered development, it maintains rural characteristics.
4. The appeal site comprises an historic barn and associated outbuildings, arranged in an 'L' shape. These structures have been converted into a residential dwelling, with some modest extensions. The conversion appears sympathetic to the historic form of the buildings and, despite its residential use, is respectful of its agricultural heritage.
5. The barn itself is set back from Burrows Lane, however a single storey offshoot projects towards the road with its brick gable sitting on the front boundary. The lower levels of the site are otherwise partially screened along this frontage by a hedgerow. The site is also considerably obscured from view when approaching from the north by the development at Kings Court.
6. However, in closer views the barn can be seen above and between the adjacent tree and shrub planting, and the openness of the site access further enhances its presence in the street scene, particularly when approaching from the south.

- The host dwelling therefore remains a somewhat prominent feature that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area.
7. The proposed extension would sit in front of the barn when viewed from Burrows Lane, extending above the existing single storey offshoot towards the road. It would partially obscure the northern portion of the barn from this vantage point. Despite its relatively modest ridge height and roof form, it would also obscure the barn's characteristic half-hipped roof design and form a somewhat incongruous valley between the two roofs.
 8. Additionally, the projection of the extension forward of the existing single storey offshoot would emphasise its mass and would give the site a more cramped appearance. The eaves height of the extension would also be the same as the main barn, thereby eroding the hierarchy between the existing structures. Overall, this would detract from the existing character and appearance of the site and its contribution to that of the surrounding area.
 9. I recognise that the appeal proposal would be viewed within the context of the development adjacent at Kings Court. In particular, the expansive roof slope of the building adjacent to the site boundary rises above that of the host dwelling's single storey offshoot and sits prominently in the setting of the appeal site when viewed from the south. This somewhat harms the setting of the barn and therefore the screening of this roof slope by the appeal proposal would provide some visual benefit. I do not consider however that this is sufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused by the relationship of the proposal to the host dwelling.
 10. I am also advised that the original planning permission for the host dwelling (Council ref 16/P/01579) resulted in the removal of other large barn structures, reducing the massing of the built form on the appeal site. However, I must consider the effect of the proposal in the context of the current prevailing character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. This does not therefore justify development that would result in harm in this respect.
 11. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy D1 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015-2034 Adopted 25th April 2019 and Policy G5 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan Adopted January 2003. These policies seek, among other provisions, to ensure all new development achieves a high quality design that responds to distinctive local character and respects the local context and surrounding environment.
 12. The proposal would also conflict with the Council's Residential Extensions and Alterations SPD 2018, which indicates extensions should be subordinate to and in character with the existing dwelling, and not over-dominate or be discordant with the main property. It would also be contrary to Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), in respect of its aim of achieving well designed places.

Other Matters

13. The appellant highlights that the conversion of the barn provided generous family living accommodation albeit only limited bedroom space. I recognise the proposal would provide additional bedrooms, which would be beneficial to the

appellant, however this would not outweigh the identified harm and development plan conflict.

14. The application was preceded by pre-application advice, which I am advised concerned a very similar proposal to that which is before me, and which indicated that the impact on the scale and character of the existing dwelling was considered likely to be acceptable by the Council at that time. The Framework acknowledges the benefits of early engagement and good quality pre-application discussion. While such advice is not binding, it is clearly unfortunate when a different decision is reached on an application. The Council's advice letter is clear however that it represents an informal opinion only, and that it was given without prejudice to any decision the Council may make on any subsequent formal planning application. Ultimately, I must deal with the appeal based on its planning merits and this matter does not lead me to a different conclusion on the main issue.
15. I recognise that the proposal may not unduly harm the living conditions of neighbours. However, the absence of harm or development plan conflict with respect to other relevant matters is neutral and weighs neither for nor against the proposal.
16. The appellant alleges the proposed extension would only be visible by a single neighbour, and that they raised no planning objection to the proposal. However, objections were received from interested parties and, in any event, the absence of an objection would not in itself weigh in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

17. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole, and there are no material considerations that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Ryan Cowley

INSPECTOR