



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 May 2023

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/22/3311664

Albury Lodge, Warren Drive, Kingswood, Tadworth KT20 6PZ

- 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 Steve Martin against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01600/HHOLD, dated 14 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 13 October 2022.
 - The development proposed was described as 'removal of existing main roof and construction of new roof, approximately 400mm higher, forming crown roof construction, gable ends, and new rear dormers. New roof space to comprise new second floor habitable accommodation'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of development in the banner above is taken from the application form. Prior to its decision, the Council considered amended plans for the new roof to instead be approximately 750mm higher than the existing main roof.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of Albury Lodge and The Warren and The Glade Residential Area of Special Character (the RASC).

Reasons

4. Albury Lodge is a large, detached house in a spacious, landscaped plot in the RASC. The main two-storey front part sits wide across the plot facing Warren Drive behind a hedgerow boundary, shrubs and trees. Cream render and painted brick elevations, a shallow pitched brown clay tiled main roof with gable ends and a front gable on one side give this part of the house its own simple external envelope and clear horizontal emphasis front and rear. The distinctiveness of the RASC includes its traditional and modern individually designed, sizeable, detached dwellings in extensive landscaped gardens. Hedge, shrub and tree lined front garden boundaries along a network of private roads give pleasant vistas and add to the verdant layout of this development. Albury Lodge therefore makes a positive contribution to the RASC.
5. The flat crown of the new roof would be long and though narrow (front to back) run across the entire house to each gable end elevation. One end would be

mostly screened behind an enlarged chimney stack and in perpendicular views from Warren Drive appear as a conventional ridge line along the top of the front roof slope. However, the flat roof profile of the other end gable elevation would be conspicuous at this high level in angled views from Warren Drive to the north. While crown roofs are a feature of some houses in the RASC, truncating a conventional vertical gable in this way to form this crown roof would be alien to the existing roof profile of the house and appreciably alter the identity of Albury Lodge. It is also not a roof form that I have been referred to elsewhere in the RASC or that I saw. There is, therefore, no relevant local context for this particular variation and individual aspect of the proposal.

6. The glazing and placement of three rear dormers would broadly reflect the design, position and proportions of windows below. Nevertheless, each would be very wide with low-pitched gable roofs, giving a squat appearance. The dormers would also be unequally spaced and stretch across most of the roof at a second floor level, set high up close to the main ridge line with a large gap to the eaves and windows below. Rear dormers are not incompatible in principle with Albury Lodge or the RASC and need not repeat the design of other dormers, but this number, sequence and design would add appreciable bulk to this part of the roof with a greater vertical emphasis. This disjointed result would unduly detract from the existing uncluttered roof form and horizontal proportion of the rear of the house.
7. An Inspector found large rear roof dormers acceptable elsewhere in the RASC¹, including because of their 'very limited visual presence'. However, the two dormers in that case were at first floor level either side of a chimney with flat roofs set away from the ridge. To all intents and purposes, they were more akin to a first floor rear extension. That case is not, therefore, directly comparable. In any event, in my view, the absence of greater public visibility does not necessarily equate to absence of significant innate harm to matters of acknowledged planning interest; in this case, the potential for individual or cumulative unsympathetic piecemeal change to erode the holistic integrity of individual dwellings and the RASC overall.
8. The pitch of the new main roof slopes would be appreciably steeper and so increase the extent of built form between eaves and ridge levels. While this would give the house a top-heavier appearance, the vertical height increase would be relatively modest. At the front the pitch would more closely match the steeper pitch of the front gable, which would sit comfortably below the main ridge with a balanced, subservient relationship to the extent of new roof. A row of four small rooflights would be innocuous. As such, the overall scale and massing of the new roof would not in itself appear disproportionate and would maintain an uncluttered horizontal emphasis to the front of the house.
9. Plain clay tiles would closely match the existing roof tiles, the chimney stack would be made taller with a design and external materials that matched the existing chimney and the increased height and area of each end gable would use matching external materials. A new window in the front gable would be centrally placed and match the design and proportion of existing windows in the house.
10. These aspects of the proposal would also broadly reflect features at other dwellings nearby so be compatible in the RASC. Additionally, the proposal

¹ APP/L3625/D/21/3285743

would not intrude on the landscaped setting of Albury Lodge or the surrounding landscaped context of the RASC. In these respects, the house would continue to contribute positively to diversity and local distinctiveness in the RASC.

11. Nevertheless, part of the crown roof and the rear dormers would not respect important features of Albury Lodge and have an unacceptable adverse impact on the character and appearance of this house; in turn cause intrinsic harm to the character and appearance of the RASC. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with Policy CS4 of the Reigate & Banstead Core Strategy July 2014 and with Policies DES1 and DES3 of the Reigate & Banstead Development Management Plan September 2019. These policies include that the form of buildings should respect and maintain valued townscapes, reinforce local distinctiveness having regard to roofscapes and design should make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

Other Matters

12. The proposal would be acceptable in terms of effect on the living conditions of existing occupiers of nearby dwellings as well as parking and access at the site. The absence of harm in these regards are neutral factors in my decision.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. The proposal would enhance the appellant's living conditions and enjoyment of Albury Lodge and provide employment during construction works. As private social benefits and modest economic benefits, these considerations have limited weight. Some aspects of the proposal would be compatible with Albury Lodge and reinforce its individual design in the RASC and as such be modest environmental benefits. However, the harm that I have found to Albury Lodge and the RASC in the wider public interest due to the crown roof and dormer windows are important environmental considerations of significant weight. The benefits do not, therefore, outweigh the harm.
14. The proposal does not accord with the development plan taken as whole. There are no material considerations to indicate that the decision should not be made otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, for the reasons given above the proposal is unacceptable and the appeal does not therefore succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR