



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 September 2023

by Stewart Glassar BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/22/3311226

Technology House, Church Road, Shottermill, Haslemere GU27 1NU

- 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 Property G & H Ltd against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2022/00568, dated 2 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is refurbishment of Technology House to include existing ground floor shop and 6 residential units with associated car parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Property G & H Ltd against Waverley Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. Between the determination of the planning application and the appeal coming before me, additional information was forthcoming to address the second reason for refusal, which related to highway safety. Based on the additional information, the Highway Authority acknowledged the acceptability of the proposal on highway safety grounds. As a result, the Local Planning Authority confirmed that it no longer wished to pursue the second reason for refusal. Accordingly, I make no further reference to it in my decision.
4. In March 2023, subsequent to its decision on the appeal proposal, the Council adopted the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2). This replaced all the remaining policies in the Waverley Local Plan 2002 (WLP). For the purposes of this appeal, the Council indicated that Policy DM5 of the LPP2 superseded the applicable parts of Policies D1 and D4 from the WLP. The appellant's final comments include direct reference and observation in relation to Policy DM5. I am therefore satisfied that the appellant has had an opportunity to comment on the new policy.
5. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published by the Government after the determination of the planning application. It does not raise any new considerations in relation to this appeal.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site comprises a building with a parking area to the rear. Although its footprint and overall shape are different from other nearby buildings, its unremarkable architecture and brick and tile external finishes ensure that it is not unduly prominent within the street scene.
8. Whilst there is some variety in the design, appearance and age of buildings along Church Road an overriding character is that buildings are predominantly finished in brick and have a tiled, pitched roof. That there is a degree of variation to these pitched roofs adds an element of visual interest without undermining the overall character of the area.
9. The alterations to the front of the appeal building would be limited and the proposed rear extension would only be more widely visible when viewed from Church Road and to the north of the building. Nevertheless, the awkward arrangement of flat and pitched roof elements and resulting rectangular built form would appear manifestly at odds with the form and appearance of the host building and surrounding properties. The awkward juxtaposition would jar injuriously within the street scene.
10. Variety and difference do not necessarily lead to harm. However, in this particular case the proposed addition instead of positively contributing, would have an unsympathetic visual relationship with its surroundings that would harm the character and appearance of the wider area.
11. The proposal is described as an infill that would use good quality external materials. However, this would not diminish or overcome the discordant nature of the addition or help to anchor the proposal within its surroundings.
12. Taking all of the above into account, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of both the appeal property and the area. Consequently, it would conflict with Policy TD1 of the Waverley Local Plan Part 1 (2018) and Policy H6 of the Haslemere Neighbourhood Plan (2013 – 2032) which, amongst other things, seek to ensure developments are of a high-quality design that respect and respond to the character of the area.
13. It is not entirely clear to me that the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Residential Extensions' 2010, would be applicable to this case. However, I note that it supports extensions which reflect and complement the design and appearance of the host property and encourages the use of pitched roofs rather than flat roofs.

Other Matters

14. Two of the proposed flats would have their own balcony areas. A communal grassed lawn area to the rear of the building is therefore also proposed. It is set adjacent to the car parking spaces and would be shaded by trees for parts of the day. It does not strike me as being a particularly attractive area in which future occupants would wish to spend much time. However, even if I were to conclude that the size and position of the garden area was acceptable and the proposal complied with Policy DM5 of the LPP2, it would not overcome the harm I have identified in regard to the extension of the building.
15. The scheme is said, amongst other things, to protect the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and retain the existing retail use. Furthermore, the

units would meet the space standards and be accessible and adaptable. However, such matters would represent an absence of harm and so are neutral in the overall balance.

Planning Balance

16. There is no dispute amongst the main parties that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. Accordingly, Paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework is engaged.
17. The proposal would also accord with the Framework's support for housing, for windfall sites and making efficient use of land. The Framework recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built out relatively quickly.
18. Whilst the proposal is for 6 units, the Council has approved a scheme for 4 units (a net increase of 3). As such, it is the additional 2 units provided by the appeal scheme to which I should have most regard in any balance. Overall, these are factors which carry moderate weight in the proposal's favour.
19. The proposal would also offer smaller sized accommodation for which there is said to be demand, within a more energy efficient refurbished building that would also offer some biodiversity enhancements. Although only limited details are provided and some low energy measures are becoming more common, these factors can nevertheless be given a small amount of positive weight.
20. There would be some time-limited, economic benefit during the construction phase, which may give rise to extra local employment. There would also be longer term economic support to the area, once the units were occupied. The properties would also provide a social benefit of further households in the area. However, given the scale of the development I attribute only limited weight to these economic and social benefits in support of this scheme.
21. Conversely, the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of both the building and the wider area. The need to achieve well-designed places and ensure that development is sympathetic to local character are perennial and in direct compliance with the Framework. Whilst the harm would be localised, it would nevertheless be long lasting and unlikely to diminish over time. As such, the weight I attribute to this harm means that the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Conclusion

22. Whilst there would be some beneficial aspects of the scheme, considered overall the development would cause harm which would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no other material considerations, including the Framework, which lead me to determine the appeal other than in accordance with the development plan.
23. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Stewart Glassar

INSPECTOR