



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 October 2023

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/Y/23/3320817

71A Poyle Road, Tongham, Farnham, Surrey GU10 1DX

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Monica Malfa against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/P/01445, dated 18 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2022.
 - The works proposed are a two storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the appeal relates to an application for listed building consent, I have had special regard to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act').
3. Subsequent to the Council's decision on the application, the Local Plan Development Management Policies was adopted in March 2023 ('the DMP') and superseded policies of the Guildford Local Plan 2003 including HE4 which was cited in the reason for refusal. While appeals made under s20 of the Act are not subject to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and so do not need to be determined in accordance with the development plan, relevant provisions of the development plan can be a material consideration. The main parties have been able to comment on any implications of the change in policy as part of their evidence, and I am satisfied that no prejudice would be caused by my determination of the appeal having regard to the policies of the DMP insofar as they are relevant.
4. The Council's reason for refusal includes reference to the lack of a structural appraisal. However, the appellant suggests that this is an error and has been carried forward from the refusal of a previous scheme which included repairs to the chimney stack and roof; works which are not part of the current proposal. Beyond the reason for refusal, the Council's evidence for the current proposal makes no reference to the lack of a structural appraisal and I have no firm reason to find that one would be likely to be necessary. I have not therefore considered this matter further as part of my assessment of the appeal.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed works on the special interest of the Grade II listed building 'The Old Farmhouse' (Ref: 1029609) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

6. The Old Farmhouse was first listed in 1967. The building dates to the late 16th century with 19th century extensions to the western side. The main two-storey part of the building includes an exposed timber frame with whitewashed brick infill and a plain-tiled roof with a large multiple stack projecting through. There is a gabled bay to the eastern side of the building which includes curved bracing and to the side of this is a single-storey projection with a pentice roof which also has timber framing and brick infill.
7. The building has been subdivided into 3 dwellings and the appeal property (71A Poyle Road) occupies a two-storey wing at a right angle to the rear of the building. The rear wing lacks an exposed timber frame, but has whitewashed brick elevations similar to the infill sections to the main building with irregularly placed small windows. It has a plain clay tiled half-hipped roof which is set down relative to the main building roof and a chimney stack projecting from the gable end wall. The appellant's Heritage Statement suggests that the rear wing may have been a former scullery to the main house, and its compact proportions, simple functional layout and plainer appearance point to its historic role and status as a subservient addition to the main house.
8. Given the above, I find the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the use of local materials and vernacular domestic detailing as well as the integrity of its form, layout and proportions.
9. The appeal proposes a two-storey extension with a single-storey section that would link it to the side of the appeal dwelling. The width, depth and overall footprint of the two-storey extension would be only very slightly smaller than the dimensions of No 71A and would more than double the width of the dwelling when combined with the single-storey link. It would be lower than No 71A which is itself lower than the main part of the listed building, but the two-storey part of the extension would still be a substantial structure of significant bulk and mass. I appreciate that the single-storey link would provide for a degree of separation. However, the distance would not be great and I find that the considerable scale of the extension would be overdominant when viewed against No 71A and would overwhelm the modest form and proportions of the rear wing.
10. The scale of the extension would be fairly small relative to the whole of the listed building. Even so, the marked enlargement of the rear wing which is currently clearly subservient to the main building would notably distort the overall form and layout of the building. It would also diminish the ability to appreciate the historic role and function of this part of the building and its relationship to the main house. Accordingly, the proposal would confuse and undermine the balance and hierarchy of the listed building with detriment to its legibility.
11. In addition, the appellant indicates that the extension is intended to be read as a granary-like structure with a design that has been inspired by a cart-shed and granary that once served nearby Manor Farm and using materials traditionally used in local farming buildings. They suggest that it could be mistaken for a pre-existing structure that has been restored and converted. However, I have not been made aware of any historic evidence that such a structure has been present. Notwithstanding that the extension may have been

influenced by the local context and architectural precedents as encouraged by the National Design Guide, it would lack authenticity. Furthermore, I consider that the agricultural appearance of the extension would appear awkward sitting so close to the ancillary rear wing of the listed building which has a simple domestic character and which would retain first-floor windows facing onto the extension with minimal spacing. Rather than complementing the listed building, the contrasting design of the extension would be an uncomfortable and incongruous addition that would detract from its architectural integrity.

12. The extension would not be visible from Poyle Road. However, it would be visible from a public footpath which runs along the private road adjacent to the boundary of the appeal site. Even if this were not the case, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of any public views. The absence of harm to the character or appearance of the wider area is consequently not a compelling basis to conclude that the special interest of the listed building would be preserved.
13. I find for these reasons that the proposal would fail to preserve the features of special architectural and historic interest that the listed building possesses and would cause harm to its special interest.
14. The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 ('the Framework') advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It goes on to advise that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
15. The proposal would not result in loss of historic fabric and given the extent of the works and their effect on its special interest I find that the degree of harm to the listed building would be less than substantial but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
16. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.
17. The extension would provide additional living space for occupiers of No 71A. I note comments referring to the small and limited living accommodation and existing bedrooms that do not meet minimum internal space standards set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards. However, the standard deals with internal space within new dwellings and there is no firm evidence before me demonstrating that the continued viable use of the appeal property as an existing dwelling is dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence. While I am sympathetic to the appellant's desire for accommodation for their family, this benefit is essentially a private rather than a public one.
18. The appellant refers to other potential benefits including enhancement of the energy efficiency of the building, repairs to the roof and chimney stack and enhancements to biodiversity. However, works to the existing building are not detailed as part of the current proposal and I have no firm details demonstrating that the suggested benefits would be delivered by the appeal scheme.

19. I find that the negligible public benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the considerable importance and weight that must be given to the harm that that I have identified.
20. Given the above, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building 'The Old Farmhouse', thus failing to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework. Although not determinative, it would also be contrary to Policy D3 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2019 and Policies D18 and D19 of the DMP insofar as they are relevant and together broadly seek the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets including listed buildings.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR