
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2024

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15.02.2024

Appeal Reference: APP/R3650/D/23/3329865

'Little Gorsedene', The Long Road, Rowledge GU10 4EB

- 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 and Mrs Whistlecroft against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application (reference WA/2021/01613, dated 5 May 2021) was refused by notice dated 4 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a "front and first floor extension".
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies in a rural location to the west of Rowledge, where there is a scatter of built development as well as areas of woodland and more open land. A number of residential properties are located along The Long Road, including separate houses in their own grounds and some more closely grouped buildings. The Long Road is a fairly busy rural main road, linking the villages of Rowledge and Millbridge.
4. There are three conjoined houses at 'Gorsedene House', 'Gorsedene Lodge' and 'Little Gorsedene'. They have a complex interrelationship, since they appear to have been created from one much larger house. 'Gorsedene Cottage' is located nearby, to the east, on the opposite side of a driveway that also serves further properties away from the road frontage. All these properties are set in leafy surroundings.
5. 'Little Gorsedene' itself is reached from the shared access drive and is set away from the main road frontage. It has a turning and manoeuvring area in front of the entrance to the house and a large garden to the north. The house is

generally well screened from the drive (as well as from the highway), especially in the summer.

6. The building of which 'Little Gorsedene' forms part has the appearance of a large rambling house, primarily constructed of brickwork with a complicated arrangement of pitched tiled roofs and brick chimneys. It is an attractive building but it is not statutorily listed and has evidently been altered over the years. A detached garage building at 'Little Gorsedene' stands adjacent to the shared drive, while outbuildings or outshots at 'Gorsedene Lodge' are also located between the drive and the main part of the building. 'Little Gorsedene' is a relatively small dwelling by comparison with its neighbours, with the accommodation on the ground floor.
7. It is now proposed to construct various alterations and extensions to 'Little Gorsedene'. These include the demolition of an existing conservatory and the construction of ground and first floor extensions in front of the main part of the building, extending towards the shared driveway.
8. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, although it is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities. The achievement of good design includes protecting existing residential amenities and providing good standards of accommodation.
9. An emphasis on the importance of encouraging good design is also to be found in the Development Plan. Among other Policies, attention has been drawn to Policy TD1 of the 'Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites' (dated February 2018), which is concerned with "Townscape and Design" and to Policies DM1, DM4 and DM5 of the 'Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies' (dated March 2023), which also deal with design considerations, including the need to safeguard neighbours' amenity.
10. Likewise, Policies in the 'Farnham Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2032', including Policies FNP1, FNP10 and FNP16, address these issues. In particular, Policy FNP16 deals with "Building Extensions Within and outside the Built Up Area Boundary" and it includes references to both neighbours' amenities and the effect of proposed extensions on the street scene.
11. The Council's 'Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document' (which was adopted in October 2010) is also relevant but it does not have the force of the statutory Development Plan. Moreover, the configuration of the existing building group is unusual, making it more difficult to apply generalised design concepts.
12. Proposed extensions to the dwelling at 'Little Gorsedene' would be constrained by their potential impact on the outlook from the neighbouring properties, bearing in mind the orientation of windows overlooking the site. In the case of the appeal proposals, the proposed layout has been adapted to minimise the impact of the new construction on the outlook from neighbours' windows,

taking account of notional lines drawn at 45° from the edges of neighbours' first floor windows.

13. This approach would protect neighbours' outlook, in my opinion. Indeed, the effect on the relevant west facing window in 'Gorsedene Lodge' would be minimal, since the proposed first floor extension would be some distance away. As a result, however, the scheme would generate an awkward and ungainly roofscape, with some shallower roof angles and, notably, including an uncharacteristic, angled roof on the north elevation.
14. The proposed extensions would extend towards the shared driveway but the massing would be in keeping with the sprawling footprint of the entire building and it would not be visually intrusive in its setting. The scheme would respect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and, in any case, it would be reasonably well screened.
15. Evidently, the appeal scheme is "sustainable" in planning terms, as an extension to an existing large building, and the proposed development would make a useful addition to the existing house. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the character and appearance of the existing building outweighs the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
16. In reaching these conclusions I have considered whether the appeal could be allowed but subject to conditions that might overcome the visual concerns that I have identified. In view of all the uncertainties involved, however, I have formed the opinion that it would not be possible to frame precise conditions to deal with the objections that I have identified and that therefore the appeal must be dismissed.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR