



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 9 April 2024

by J Burston BSc (Hons) MA MRPTI AIPROW

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th April 2024

Appeal A ref APP/R3650/W/23/3328947

Farnham Lodge, Union Road, Farnham GU9 7PT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Darrell Romer against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is WA/2022/02515.
 - The development proposed is the installation of solar panels on the rear south-west and north-east slopes of the roof and the fitting of associated electrical equipment in the loft space and existing ground floor cupboard.
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Appeal B ref APP/R3650/Y/23/3328949

Farnham Lodge, Union Road, Farnham GU9 7PT

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Darrell Romer against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is WA/2022/02516.
 - The works proposed are the installation of solar panels on the rear south-west and north-east slopes of the roof and the fitting of associated electrical equipment in the loft space and existing ground floor cupboard.
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Decision

1. Both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. These appeal decisions address both planning and listed building consent appeals for the same site and the same scheme. The remit of both regimes is different, however, the main issues identified below relate to both the planning appeal (Appeal A) and the listed building appeal (Appeal B). To reduce repetition and the avoidance of doubt I have dealt with both appeals together within this single decision letter.
3. In reaching my decisions I have had regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and to

the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

4. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') was published after the appeal was submitted. The sections of this document most relevant to this appeal have not been altered. As such, it has not been necessary to seek further comments from the parties.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Farnham Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

6. The appeal property 'Farnham Lodge' forms part of the grade II listed 'Church House', which was constructed as a church hall for St Andrew's Church. Farnham Lodge is said to be the former caretakers lodging but is now an independent house.
7. The significance (heritage interest) of the 1909 listed church hall, designed by Architect Richard Bassnett Preston, is derived primarily from its special architectural qualities. These include its Arts and Crafts style, with rendered walls and stone dressings, steeply pitched traditional plain clay tiled roofs, square Cupola topped with a weather vane and large leaded glass windows.
8. The CA covers a sizeable part of the attractive market town of Farnham. The significance of this designated heritage asset includes its riverside location, the contribution made by the numerous listed buildings and its medieval street layout. As noted within the Council's Farnham Conservation Area Appraisal 2005, "*Union Road also contains Church House, the only town centre example of Arts and Crafts architecture.*" This part of Union Road also has pedestrian access to Gostrey Meadow and the River Wey. Gostrey Meadow and the buildings opposite, including the appeal site and the neighbouring 'Old Court House' on Union Road form an important focal point within this part of the CA.
9. As I saw during my site visit, the appeal building is a prominent and attractive feature within the CA. Its Cupola, weather vane and the 'cat slide' roof slopes are readily visible within the street scene of Union Road. The appellant states that the Lodge, as a subservient and private part of the listed building, should be given less weight than the main church hall. I disagree with these conclusions given the architectural interest and the contribution the lodge makes to the overall Arts and Crafts style of the building.
10. The proposed installation of two arrays of 12 solar panels on the northeast and southwest rear roof slopes of Farnham Lodge would contrast awkwardly with the shape/form and appearance of the existing plain clay tiles. Whilst it is intended to minimise disturbance to the fabric of the roof the size and siting of these proposed arrays along with the 'modern' manufactured form and likely appearance of the panels would comprise a prominent and utilitarian addition to main roof slopes on this important Arts and Crafts style building. This discordant addition would markedly detract from an appreciation of the architectural interest and special qualities of the listed building. While I note that the works are potentially reversible,

the panels (and resulting harm) would nevertheless be a feature of some considerable permanence. Given the above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building. However, in the context of the Framework, the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset.

11. The solar panels proposed on the southwest elevation would also be noticeable within the CA when walking in a northerly direction along Union Road or when sitting in the Bus Shelter opposite. Whilst I acknowledge that the location of the array was chosen as it would be partially hidden behind the dormer window, this proposed array would nonetheless appear as an incongruous and harmful addition to this local landmark building and would distract from an appreciation of the simple form and appearance of the roof slope. This would diminish the contribution this building makes to the appearance and architectural interest of the CA and in particular the street scene hereabouts. In the context of the Framework, it would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset. When the CA is considered as a whole, the adverse impact upon this designated heritage asset would be limited.
12. The appellant has suggested that the proposal would not harm the listed building because the solar panels would not be widely visible. However, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
13. Paragraph 205 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 206 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. As set out above, given the scale of works to the listed building, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
14. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 208 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimal viable use.
15. The appellant states that the proposal would be beneficial because it would contribute to reducing carbon emissions. This position is supported by the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2, adopted 2023 (LP-P2) which sets out, in summary, that in September 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency and adopted a Carbon Neutrality Action Plan. I agree that any reduction in the carbon footprint of the dwelling would represent a public benefit that attracts some weight. This should be tempered in the knowledge that the Framework makes it clear that an environmental objective of achieving sustainable development also includes contributing to protecting and enhancing the built and historic environment.
16. The appellant references the Historic England publication "*Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Solar Electric (Photovoltaics)*". He states that an illustration used in this publication to demonstrate an acceptable photovoltaics (PV) system is similar to that proposed here. Whilst such PV systems may be 'generally' acceptable, the impact of the installation on the significance of the heritage asset

has to be evaluated and if the installation would harm the significance, as I have found here, then alternative options should be considered.

17. Similarly, the Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE) statement that "*By far the most sensible, practical and environmentally friendly way to regenerate renewable energy is by putting photovoltaic panels on roofs*" is to be welcomed, but in accordance with the Act, this should not at the expense of diminishing the significance of heritage assets.
18. I also acknowledge the appellant's concerns that without the introduction of energy saving technology, to reduce living expenses, that the ownership and maintenance costs of living in a listed building would be less attractive. Nevertheless, it has not been demonstrated that less harmful alternatives to PV have been fully considered which may cause less harm on the heritage asset's significance.
19. Mention was made by the appellant that if the appeal failed it would set a precedent for similar decisions in Farnham. Nevertheless, every planning application must be determined on its own merits, so I give this argument little weight. Furthermore, the lack of objections from neighbours is a neutral matter that weighs neither for nor against a proposal.
20. Taking all these matters into account, the public benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified to the heritage assets, namely both the listed building and the CA.
21. I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the Grade II listed building and the character or appearance of the CA which would neither be preserved or enhanced. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Framework, as set out above, and would conflict with the: Waverley Borough Local Plan (Part 1), Policy HA1; and the Waverley Borough Local Plan (Part 2), policies DM20 and DM21, which, amongst other matters, ensure that the significance of heritage assets are conserved or enhanced; that development proposals that affect Statutory Listed Buildings and /or their settings, preserve or enhance the buildings and their settings, and any features of special architectural or historic interest they possess; and that development proposals preserve or enhance the character of CAs.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, and taking into account all matters raised, both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

J Burston

INSPECTOR