



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 July 2024

by Victor Callister BA(Hons) PGC(Oxon) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/D/24/3337987

25 Summer Close, Byfleet, West Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7RY

- 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 Sam Spencer against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PLAN/2023/0827.
 - The development proposed is the addition of a balcony to the rear roof with a sliding patio door and 1.1metre high glass railing.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Subsequent to the decision made by the Council on the application to which this appeal relates, the Government published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) on 19 December 2023. I consider that there have been no major changes relevant to the main issue in this appeal. It will therefore not prejudice any party by making my decision with regard to the revised Framework.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the character and appearance of the host building and that of the local area.

Reasons

4. The host building is a relatively substantial one that is subdivided into a number of maisonettes. The appeal dwelling is situated at first and roof levels. The architectural form and expression of the building adopts that of a large barn and forms part of a relatively recent residential development¹ intended to appear as a collection of agricultural buildings and farm workers dwellings. This sits between earlier residential development on the edge of Byfleet and the open countryside, in an area designated as greenbelt.
5. The host building appears prominently in views not only from the development of which it forms part, but also from the open fields to its rear and one side, as well as the neighbouring residential area. In these views the, the appeal dwelling, although purpose built as maisonettes, appears convincingly as a

¹ Planning Ref: Plan/2004/0722

large traditional barn in an English vernacular style that has been converted to residential use. In doing so, it demonstrates a significant degree of symmetry in its design, both front and rear, with rooflights in the unified rear roof slope also following this strict design symmetry.

6. The proposal would insert a balcony area into the existing roof form, to that side of the roof nearest to the flank of the host building that faces onto the surrounding fields. Although this would be inset into the existing roof rather than projecting from it, it would require the removal of a pair of roof lights and roof area. This would interrupt the existing symmetry of the roof and, due to its prominence, that of the host building, which forms a significant part of its architectural expression as a traditional vernacular barn in a landscape setting of open fields to two of its sides.
7. This loss of symmetry, in combination with the insertion of the balcony area into the single large roof form and its glass railing/balustrade and patio doors, would present materials and architectural detailing that would appear incongruous in relation to the host building and its traditional vernacular architectural expression. Due to the height of the host building and its concomitant prominence in wider views, this effect would be apparent from both the surrounding open fields and the nearby residential area. As such the proposal does not accord with the design guidance set out in the Woking Design Supplementary Planning Document (2015), which advises in section 9d that roof forms that are contrary to the existing roof form will generally be resisted.
8. The proposal would, therefore, result in an unduly apparent and discordant addition to the host building, diminishing the contribution that it makes to the character and appearance of the immediate local area and the role it plays in mediating between the residential development of Byfleet and the surrounding open countryside on this side of this wider developed area.
9. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would result in substantial harm to the character and appearance of the appeal dwelling and moderate harm to that of the local area. This would conflict with Policies CS21 and CS24 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) and Paragraph 135 of the Framework. Collectively these seek development that add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, protect local landscape and townscape character and respect the setting and relationship between settlements and individual buildings in the landscape.

Conclusion

10. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposal would add to the amenity space available to the occupiers of the appeal dwelling, this is a substantially private benefit. Planning decisions are usually made in the public interest and the proposal does not result in any significant public benefit. As such I do not find that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the substantial harm to the character and appearance of the appeal dwelling and that of the local area that I have identified.
11. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Victor Callister

INSPECTOR