



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2025

by **C Shearing BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/24/3353172

The Loft, School Lane, Washington, West Sussex RH20 4AP

- 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 and Mrs Thomas against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/24/02704/HOUS.
 - The development proposed is described as 'upgrade of conservatory to form orangery styled replacement'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. During the course of the appeal, a new National Planning Policy Framework has been published (the Framework). The policies which are most relevant to the determination of the appeal have not been subject to substantive changes and I am satisfied that the parties have not been prejudiced by my taking it into account.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on designated heritage assets, in particular the Washington Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent listed building.

Reasons

4. The site lies within the Washington Conservation Area (WCA) which encompasses the outer edges of the village, broadly following School Lane and The Street to the south. The statutory duty of Section 72(1)¹ requires special attention to be had to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. The WCA has a distinctly rural character, derived from its clustering of predominately modest sized homes set among a backdrop of open green spaces and rolling hills beyond. The part of School Lane on which the appeal site lies includes houses set on small irregular sized plots with varying degrees of set back from the road. The traditional but varied design of the houses including their materials, and the intervening soft landscaping, contributes positively to the character and appearance of the WCA.
5. The Loft is a distinctive building incorporating a simple design of white painted stone and brickwork with exposed brickwork detailing. Its first floor is set primarily

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

within its roofslopes and the building adjoins the edge of the road, being set further forward than the other properties on this side of School Lane. As a consequence, it has a degree of visual prominence in views along School Lane from the west and from around the junction with Washington Bostal.

6. The Loft is immediately adjacent to Brook House to the east, which is a grade II listed building. This is a prominent stuccoed house located at the junction and includes formal and proportioned elevations including large timber sash windows and central string course. The Loft has an ancillary appearance to Brook House and the Council note it could have historically provided storage. While there would no longer appear to be a functional link between the two, they are appreciated together in views from Washington Bostal and School Lane. Accordingly, The Loft forms part of the setting of Brook House and how it is appreciated. The proximity and juxtaposition in the scale and design of these two buildings similarly contributes positively to the significance of the WCA, particularly given their position close to the junction.
7. The existing conservatory is an unsympathetic addition to The Loft due to its modern materials and design. Despite this, it has little visibility from the surrounding area given its height and distance behind the boundary hedgerow. The proposed extension would similarly be at odds with the traditional and simple appearance of The Loft by incorporating a modern square form with a raised aluminium roof lantern and modern window details.
8. However, by contrast, the proposed extension would be positioned closer to the edge of the road than the existing conservatory and would consequently sit further forward than the building lines of Brook House and the neighbouring cottages to the west. Its continuous side parapet wall would also exceed the prevailing height of the boundary hedgerow. In combination and together with its raised roof lantern, the extension would have much greater visibility from the surrounding area, from where its stark contrast with the character of the existing building, and other traditional forms nearby, would be apparent. In addition, it is not clear that the existing front hedgerow could reasonably be retained and its removal would further expose the extension and increase its visual prominence and harmful effects.
9. Given the increased visibility of the extension, it would affect the way in which The Loft and Brook House are appreciated together, particularly in views from around the junction. For the reasons set out, the proposal would dilute the contrast between the two buildings, and cause harm to the surroundings in which the listed building is experienced.
10. For the purposes of assessment against the Framework, the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of these designated heritage assets. Paragraph 215 requires that this harm is weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Based on the information before me, the benefits would be primarily private ones, rather than public, as they would be experienced by the occupants of the property. There could be some environmental benefit arising from the provision of a better insulated extension, and a reduction in light emissions from having less glazing. However the extent of these benefits is not apparent and it has not been substantiated how the proposal would improve the durability of the property. Overall, while acknowledging that there could be some limited public benefit, this would not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets, to which I give great weight.

11. Given the above, the proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the grade II listed building and the character or appearance of the WCA. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, the Framework and would conflict with policies SD5, S12, SD13, SD15 and SD31 of the South Downs Local Plan 2019 which seek, among other things, to ensure developments make a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area, conserve and enhance the historic environment including conservation areas, listed buildings and their setting. As a result the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has explored other options including an extension with a pitched roof. However, I have not been provided with details of any alternative scheme and could not therefore be satisfied that it would be more harmful. While the existing extension received planning permission in October 2004, that was of a different design and bulk, presenting different effects on the character of the area as set out above. As such it does not provide a justification for the effects of the appeal scheme.

Conclusion

13. The proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are not material considerations of sufficient weight which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

C Shearing

INSPECTOR