



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 March 2025

by G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/24/3353548

Battlebridge Hall, 181 Frenches Road, Redhill RH1 2HZ

- 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 Mohammed Khan against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00530/RET.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion with roof lights to be used as a prayer hall.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a loft conversion with roof lights to be used as a prayer hall at Battlebridge Hall, 181 Frenches Road, Redhill RH1 2HZ in accordance with the terms of the application Ref. 24/00530/RET subject to the conditions listed in the schedule.

Procedural and Preliminary Matters

2. While described as a loft conversion, an additional floor has been added to the building with the side walls increased in height and the roof profile altered. The main construction work has been undertaken, with finishing and internal work still to be completed. This is a retrospective proposal, and I have considered it on that basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on i) the character and appearance of the area and ii) the living conditions of the occupiers of No.183, with particular regard to light and overbearing impact.

Reasons

4. Battlebridge Hall is a rectangular building which occupies a modest plot close to the road with limited space around the building. It is notably different to the row of Victorian and other residential properties along Frenches Road. However, the immediate vicinity around the hall is more varied, with a disused single-storey flat-roof building to the south and a row of white rendered residential properties behind. To the other side is a single pair of semi-detached houses with a stretch of rear gardens serving the properties in Heather Close beyond.
5. The Council describes the building prior to the works as a relatively characterful hall. Nevertheless, there is nothing before me to suggest that the building was of any particular historic or architectural merit. The alterations create a building with

- an increased massing and a shallow roof pitch, but the overall height remains similar (approximately 300mm higher).
6. By adapting the existing building, the proposal facilitates a functional first floor, which provides a prayer room as part of the existing use. Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), promotes community and cultural facilities, development that encourages social interaction, and the efficient use of land. Additionally, while primarily advocated in relation to residential development, I acknowledge that the utilisation of the airspace above existing buildings is also supported, although the associated permitted development rights are not directly applicable.
 7. Prior to the alterations, the building was already distinct from its residential neighbours, and as a community building, the use of different materials and styles of buildings is not unusual. The change to the profile is to gain head height for the first floor, and in itself, I do not find the eaves height to be incongruent or the resultant form to be significantly bulky.
 8. The building, however, has a close relationship with its neighbours, and there is a notable contrast in form and materials between them. Yet, the footprint remains primarily unchanged, and the building has a limited height. It is lower than that of the neighbouring two-storey properties, which also screen views of the Hall along the road from the north.
 9. The resultant building does have the appearance of a warehouse, and while the blue colour and render have a greater visual presence, I do not find the form incompatible with the area. The corrugated material reflects the existing building, though currently the upper floor shrouds over it and is a different colour. However, the development is not fully complete, and the colour and external finish could be altered. This is an aspect which could be secured by condition, and the approval of the external details is included in the Council's suggested list of conditions to which the appellant has raised no objection.
 10. In conclusion, while the building does not reflect the general appearance and materials of the residential properties along Frenches Road, the proposal supports an established community facility, and the details of the external appearance can be agreed. As such, I do not find the altered form of the building to be significantly obtrusive to the character of the area as a whole. The development therefore generally accords with the provisions of policies DES1 and DES2 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan (2019) (DMP) which require that all development is of a high-quality design, respects the character and appearance of its surroundings, provides an appropriate environment for occupants, and respects the scale, form and material of the existing building.

Relationship with the Neighbour

11. Immediately to the north of the appeal site is No.183, a two-storey Victorian property. It has a relatively deep form with an outrigger to the rear, and its garden wraps around the appeal site. The appellant's Daylight and Sunlight Assessment, which is accepted by the Council, demonstrates compliance with the relevant guidance in relation to light and sunlight to the windows and garden.
12. The proximity of the side elevation of the Hall to the boundary is unchanged, and the original building would already have an enclosing effect. Therefore, while the

raised height of the walls has increased the massing and will provide some additional visual presence, having regard to the existing situation, I do not find that it would have substantially altered the relationship to make the changes over-dominating.

13. Thereby, and together with the supporting assessment, the proposal accords with DMP policy DES1 with regard to not adversely impacting upon the amenity of the occupants of nearby buildings, including by way of overbearing, obtrusiveness, overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy.

Other Matters

14. Interested parties raise additional concerns in relation to parking and its impact on the surrounding area. The Hall does not have any off-street parking but the application was supported by a parking stress survey and the Council found, as set out in the officer's report, that it accords with DMP policy TAP1. Whilst I understand the frustrations relating to inconsiderate parking, which is noted to occur at specific times, based on the evidence before me, it is demonstrated that there is parking capacity in the locality. The specific locations of parked vehicles are subject to normal policing and controls within the highway. As such I have no reason to disagree with the Council's findings on this matter.

Conditions and Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out, and subject to a unified external finish, I find that the proposal accords with the development plan as a whole.
16. The conditions imposed are those which have been suggested by the Council but with some variation in the interests of clarity and precision. A plans condition is necessary in order to provide certainty, and conditions are required to secure the cycle storage provision and obscure glazing to the rear windows to maintain privacy.
17. I have altered the external materials conditions to require the details within 2 months while maintaining the implementation period. Given that the works are currently taking place the timeframe is considered more than sufficient for the information to be submitted to the Council.
18. The appeal is therefore allowed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR

Condition Schedule

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan, Elevation Plan KHAN/PLAN/001 A, Elevation Plan KHAN/PLAN/002, and Floor Plan KHAN/PLAN/003.
2. Within 2 months of the date of this decision, details of the external surfaces including, the colour of the walls shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the agreed external finish

shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details within 6 months of the date of permission.

3. The first-floor windows in the rear elevations of the development hereby permitted shall be glazed with obscured glass and shall be non-opening unless the parts of the window which can be opened are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed and shall be maintained as such at all times.
4. The first floor hereby approved shall not be brought into use until facilities are provided within the site in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing with the Local Planning Authority for the secure, covered parking of 6 bicycles and the provision of a charging point for e-bikes. Thereafter the bike parking area shall be retained and maintained for its designated purpose.