



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 28 January 2026

by J Moore BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 MARCH 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/R3650/W/25/3373342

34 West Street, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7DR

- 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 Mrs Judy Lane against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is WA/2025/00891.
 - The development proposed was originally described as erection of a rear dormer window.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/R3650/Y/25/3373340

34 West Street, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7DR

- 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 Mrs Judy Lane against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is WA/2025/00892.
 - The works proposed were originally described as erection of a rear dormer window.
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Decisions

1. Both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Both appeals relate to the same proposal under different but complementary legislation. Where possible, I have therefore dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning. However, to avoid duplication I have dealt with the two schemes together, except where otherwise indicated.
3. Although there is a minor error in the name of the appellant in one appeal form, the appellant has confirmed the correct name, which I have used in my banner heading above. The reasons for refusal refer to differing versions and dates of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan (FNP). The Council has confirmed the relevant version is that as submitted to the appeal, as updated for the March 2020 Referendum and references to other versions were made in error. I am satisfied that no party has been prejudiced in these matters.
4. The proposal relates to a listed building located within the Farnham Town Centre Conservation Area (CA). As required by sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area; and had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effects of the proposal upon the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II listed building '34 35 36 West Street'¹, of which the appeal property is a part; and upon the character or appearance of the Farnham Town Centre CA.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

6. The listed building dates from the early 19th century and is a three-storey mid terrace with basement, of brick with a slate roof. It sits within a wider terraced row comprising Nos 33-37 (consecutive) to include No 33a, which adjoins the appeal property at No 34. There is an alley at each end of the terraced row which provides access to further properties behind West Street. Nos 33 and 33a are also listed and date from the 18th century. In contrast, their main elevations are of stucco, with a steeper tiled roof of a lower ridge height. Both list entries detail other listed buildings at Nos 18, 37, 43, 45 and Nos 19-46 (consecutive) as forming a group.
7. I find the significance and special interest of the listed building largely stems from the architectural composition of the primary elevation and its integral relationship with the wider terrace. Significance is also derived from the hierarchy of internal spaces, which are reflected in surviving architectural detailing and plan form, with smaller proportioned windows to the upper levels.
8. The evidence before me indicates that the significance of the CA stems in part from its medieval street layout and its prosperity as a market town. This is apparent in the architecture of its 18th and early 19th century buildings, which are largely reflective of the Georgian period and sited along a linear layout with rear yards and alleys. West Street is typical in this regard. Insofar as related to these appeals, I find the significance of the CA is primarily associated with the architectural details of its period buildings, the hierarchy of internal spaces reflected in window proportions, grander detailing within frontages, and views of the historic townscape from yards and alleys.
9. From the evidence before me and my own observations, the rear elevations of the terraced row have lost homogeneity, owing to an assortment of extensions and modifications over time. Nos 35-37 each have flat-roofed rear dormers of a substantial scale. Their rear elevations include painted blockwork, render, hanging slate and painted timber/cladding and windows vary in style and proportion. Consequently, there is a high degree of discordance within the rear townscape of the terraced row in this section of West Street, such that the significance of its rear roofscape has been diminished. However, the rear roof plane of No 34 is unaltered, forming the last vestige of the rear roofscape of the listed building.

Effects

10. The proposal would result in a flat roofed dormer positioned almost centrally within the rear roof plane, set in from an existing chimney stack and neighbouring roofs. The proposal would harm the listed building by the removal of historic fabric within the roof plane. The proposed works include raising the height of an internal door to enable the use of a storage space as a small bathroom which would connect to

¹ List Entry number 1258469

existing plumbing in the bathroom below. It is not clear whether the door is original, but it is a simple, timber painted door, with a traditional latch. At present, the use of the space is clearly restricted in terms of head height not only by the low doorway, but also the limitations of the roof slope. In essence, it is the attic space of the original building. While the appellant suggests that the proposal would be reversible, it would likely be a permanent feature.

11. Due to its siting, height, depth and width, the proposed dormer would be positioned well below the ridge line and well above the eaves. This would accord with the Council's guidance for dormer windows in the Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Extensions (SPD). However, due to its scale and flat roofed form, it would appear as a box-like structure, in conflict with the SPD, where flat roofed dormers are normally unacceptable, unless justified on the grounds of an historical architectural argument. The appellant's justification is advanced partly on the grounds that the dormer would result in increased headroom to enable the habitable use of the space. However, this conflicts with the SPD, which sets out that the purpose of dormer windows is to provide light and ventilation, and that additional headroom should be regarded as an unintended benefit. Further, the SPD sets out that additional headroom should be achieved from the main roof area.
12. Although the proposed window would be of a traditional timber sash window style, its large proportions would undermine the hierarchy of internal space within the rear elevation. This would conflict with the SPD which seeks to ensure that dormer windows reflect those of the main house, and states that a proportionately smaller size is more appropriate to reflect the subordinate role of the roof in comparison with the main dwelling. Even though the proposed dormer would be significantly smaller to those at Nos 35-37, and use sympathetic externally facing materials, it would appear as a disproportionate and dominant form within the narrow roof plane of No 34.
13. The rear dormer would not be visible within the street scene along West Street, and this appears to be the basis upon which the main parties agree that it would not harm the CA. Notwithstanding the Council's position, the reason for refusal clearly refers to a concept of 'visual disarray', which represents concern about matters of appearance. I am also mindful of representations to the appeal and during the determination phase from interested parties, where concerns are raised regarding the effect upon the CA. I must also bear in mind my statutory duties.
14. The appellant's photographic evidence indicates that views from the grounds of Farnham Library are largely obscured when vegetation is in leaf. However, during my visit, I was able to see the rear roof plane of No 34 from the nearby alleys and from the library's grounds, which also lie within the CA. Such views, even if limited, enable the unmodified rear roof plane of No 34 to be appreciated and form a key aspect of the significance of the CA.
15. In any event, the fact of the matter is that limited public views have little bearing on my consideration of the effect upon the CA, as I am duty bound to consider the effect upon the character or appearance of the CA as a whole. In addition, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.

16. Given my finding that the proposal would appear as a disproportionate and dominant form within the narrow roof plane of No 34, it logically follows that the proposal would have some visual impact upon the CA. While not all parts of a CA may contribute to significance, in this case the medieval street layout forms a key part of the significance of the CA, where the rear townscape can be appreciated from yards and alleys. The proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA as it would alter the appearance of the rear historic townscape through the addition of a dominant and disproportionate form.
17. For the above reasons, I find that the proposal would harm the historic roof fabric of the listed building and fail to preserve the hierarchy of internal spaces; and it would harm the appearance of the CA. While the sheer scale of nearby rear dormers has significantly altered the appearance of the rear roofscape of the terraced row, diluting its significance, this does not justify further harm to the listed building, nor to the CA.
18. In reaching my findings, I have taken account of the appellant's example at No 27 West Street, which includes flat roofed dormers. The Council's evidence indicates that this scheme concerned a lodge house built in 2015, and a proposal was made under a s73 application to vary an existing consent. The proposal was found not to contribute to the significance of the relevant listed building, nor affect its historic fabric. During my visit, I saw that the dormers did not dominate the roof plane of this building. For these reasons, the example is not directly comparable. During my visit I saw other dormers within the CA, including flat roofed and gabled forms. Those I saw were of a subordinate scale to the roof and respected the hierarchy of internal spaces.
19. Given the above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building; and it would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the CA. Consequently, I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of these appeals.

Public benefits and balance

20. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 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. Given the scale of the proposal, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance and at the lower end of that spectrum, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
21. In such circumstances, I am required to weigh this harm against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. The appellant rightly directs my attention to the Planning Practice Guidance which makes clear that benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit. However, the relevant paragraph² also sets out that public benefits could be anything that delivers the economic, social or environmental objectives as

² Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019

described in the Framework; and they should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit.

22. The appellant considers that public benefit would be created by securing optimum viable use to an existing habitable loft space. Further, a convenient bathroom across the small landing from the second bedroom would make the property more 'age friendly', by avoiding the need to navigate the stairwell and would make the dwelling more desirable to live in and extend its lifespan.
23. However, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal is the only or least harmful way to make the property more 'age friendly'. Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence before me to demonstrate that residential use is unviable or dependent on the proposal, or that such a use would cease if I were to dismiss the appeals. The proposal would therefore be largely a private benefit for existing and future occupiers of the property. As such I attach limited positive weight to this benefit. I also find that temporary economic benefits would arise during the construction phase, limited by the scale of the proposal.
24. Collectively, the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm that I have found, to which I am required to attach great weight. I therefore conclude that on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building and features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework.
25. The proposal would conflict with Policies HA1 and TD1 of the Waverley Local Plan (WLP) Part 1; Policies DM4 and DM20 of the WLP Part 2; and Policies FNP1 and FNP16 of the FNP. Taken together, these policies seek to ensure that development is of high-quality design that responds to distinctive local, heritage and townscape character; conserves or enhances heritage assets and respects their significance, taking account of public benefits and relevant guidance. In respect of Appeal A, the proposed development would not be in accordance with the development plan.

Other Matters

26. I have had regard to representations raising a wide range of concerns including, but not limited to the following: privacy, loss of light, outlook, and whether the proposal is technically deliverable or compliant with Building Regulations. However, as I am dismissing the appeal, and further consideration of these matters would not alter my decision, it is not necessary for me to consider them further.

Conclusion

27. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

J Moore

INSPECTOR