



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2022

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12TH January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/D/21/3280035

The Old Rectory, Church Road, Sandhurst, Cranbrook TN18 5NS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs R Elliot against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/03797/FULL, dated 18 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing flat roof brick three bay garage and construction of a new cart style car port with storage/office space in roof, new pitched dormers to front and conservation rooflights to rear.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

3. The proposal is for the replacement of the existing flat roof three bay garage within the grounds of the Grade II listed The Old Rectory with a larger, four bay, cart style carport with storage/office in the roof space. The Old Rectory is a substantial red brick property over three floors dating from the 18th century, re-fronted and extended in the 19th. The garage in question forms part of the rear service courtyard of the property with access off Church Road and forms a group with a pitched roof outbuilding and The Old Rectory's imposing Victorian rear elevation with its tall brick chimney stacks and three dormer windows.
4. There is no dispute that the existing garage is of no architectural value and the new cart style carport with its sympathetic materials, hipped roof and small pitched dormers facing the house would not harm the setting of the listed building or its significance in heritage terms. It follows that the Council's objections that the scale of the proposal would nevertheless be unsympathetic to the host property, insufficiently modest or visually subservient to be an ancillary outbuilding, are unfounded. The proposal, as now reduced in size, would form a visually satisfactory part of the courtyard group.
5. However, the existing garage block backs onto Church Road, a rural lane with its initial section fronted by properties set behind well vegetated boundaries.

Although on significantly higher ground than the road, due to its flat roof and set back behind a tall but thin hedge boundary, the existing garage block is relatively discreet, although visible because one of the bays is accessed from the road via a sloping drive as it serves Quinces, the adjacent bungalow.

6. The proposal would introduce a wider and taller building into the street scene. Although of suitable materials and rural cart lodge style design with its pitched roof sloping away and discreet conservation style roof lights, it would be sited noticeably closer to the road¹. This factor would result in the building being significantly more prominent when seen from the lower-level road², and whilst the hedgerow provides some screening this would not be fully effective, may not be permanent and cannot screen the Quinces end of the building. Bringing the building closer to the road would reduce the scope for successful screening and lowering the level of Quinces' garage and adapting its driveway and side gate may have other adverse effects, details being absent. The result would be to significantly erode the character and appearance of the verdant rural lane.
7. The appellant draws attention to the large two storey extension incorporating a double garage to Woodlands just to the south east, but this is attached to the house and set well back from the road. The substantial detached carport with office/store over at The Old Priests House, Bodiam Road is also set well back from the road. Whilst these are examples of a large extension and ancillary building in relation to the host building, neither are comparable to the current proposal in relation to their close proximity to the road.
8. For these reasons the proposal would significantly harm the existing verdant character and appearance of Church Road and, in consequence, cause some small-scale harm to the High Weald AONB of which it forms part. This would conflict with Policies EN1 and EN25 of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2006 and Core Policy 4 of the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy 2010. These require proposals to respect the context of the site; outside defined limits to built development to have minimal impact on local landscape character; not result in unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane which is of landscape or amenity importance; and finally seek to conserve and enhance the High Weald AONB. There would however be no significant harm to the Grade II listed The Old Rectory or its setting and thus no conflict with Local Plan Policy H11 in relation to ancillary buildings.

Conclusion

9. Having regard to the above the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR

¹ A factor not mentioned or assessed in the Council officer's report.

² 1.7 m lower according to the appellant's Design and Access Statement which notes the visual impact of the building will be emphasised as a result.