

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

10 NOV 2023

COMMUNITY & PLANNING SERVICES

Supporting Planning Statement **Conversion of building from A1 use to C3 and proposed new garage.**

56 and 58 High Street, Farningham, DA4 0DB

1 November 2023

Site Description and Historical Background

56 High Street is a Grade II Listed, two storey terraced dwelling within the Conservation Area and AONB.

58 High Street is a detached building located to the rear of 56 High Street. Historical records show that the building was previously used as a workshop/retail business for the repair and sale of antique furniture. The shop has no frontage to the High Street, and the business eventually became unviable.

As such, permission was sought, and granted under reference 11/02671/FUL to convert the building to a residential dwelling.

Description of Proposed Works

This current application includes the refurbishment and conversion of the building to a residential use, including a loft conversion with dormer window, and extending it with a single storey side extension behind a rebuilt garage.

The application is supported by a Structural Report to show that the building is capable of conversion, and a Heritage Statement. The building is falling into disrepair, and should permission be granted, then it guarantees the future of this heritage asset.

Relevant Planning Policy

Policies National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Para 11 of the NPPF confirms that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

Para 11 of the NPPF also states that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless:

- * the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- * any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- * Footnote 7 (see reference above) relates to policies including SSSIs, Green Belt, AONBs, designated heritage assets and locations at risk of flooding.

Core Strategy (CS)

- * LO1 Distribution of Development
- * LO7 Development in Rural Settlements
- * SP1 Design of New Development and Conservation
- * SP2 Sustainable Development
- * SP08 Economic Development and Land for Business
- * SP10 Green Infrastructure, Open Space and Recreation Provision

- * SP11 Biodiversity Allocations and Development Management (ADMP)

Allocations and Development Management (ADMP)

- * SC1 Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- * EN1 Design Principles
- * EN2 Amenity Protection
- * EN4 Heritage Assets
- * EN5 Landscape
- * EMP5 Non-allocated employment sites
- * T2 Parking
- * T3 Provision of an Electric Vehicle Charging Point

Other

- * Farningham Conservation Area Appraisal

Planning Appraisal

Principle of Development

Policy LO1 of the Core Strategy states that development will be focused within the built confines of existing settlements. Policy LO7 refers to development within rural settlements and states that these will be locations for small scale development.

Para 124 of the NPPF (in part) states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens) or of promoting regeneration and change.

The site is located within the built confines of Farningham and is surrounded by existing residential uses.

The conversion of the building to C3 use has already been established as acceptable under 11/02671/FUL.

Should the above be in dispute, then it is clear that the building does not make a significant contribution to the rural economy, and the use of the building as a workshop would be, by current standards, undesirable with potential to cause noise and disturbance to adjacent neighbouring properties as confirmed in the recent Officers Report for 22/02844.

Impact on the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

The range of alterations proposed at 58 High Street will result in a sympathetic adaptation of the building that will make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and the setting of adjacent historic buildings.

The alterations are minimal and relate to the replacement of a modern garage with small scale buildings to accommodate a modest garage and living room extension to the existing building, and a sympathetically designed dormer window that is in proportion to the roof of the building.

The front elevation of the building will be made good and repainted, which will further enhance the appearance of the building and carefully designed windows will reflect the original use of the building.

The proposals are therefore consistent with national and local planning policy. In terms of policy EN4, the historic and architectural significance of the non - designated heritage asset has been preserved. The development proposals are minor in scale and will not cause harm to the building, its setting, or the Conservation Area.

Refer to the Heritage Statement for further information.

Design, Character, and the Impact on the AONB

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 states that the Local Planning Authority should conserve and enhance Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Designating an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty protects its distinctive character and natural beauty and can include human settlement and development.

There are therefore two considerations directly related to a site's AONB status when determining a planning application. Firstly, does the application conserve the AONB and secondly, if it does conserve the AONB does it result in an enhancement. A failure to achieve both of these points will result in a conflict with the requirements of the Act.

Policy EN5 of the ADMP states that the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings will be given the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Proposals within the AONB will be permitted where the form, scale, materials and design will conserve and enhance the character of the landscape and have regard to the relevant Management Plan and associated guidance.

Policy SP1 of the Core Strategy and Policy EN1 of the ADMP state that all new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to and respect the character of the area in which it is situated. This includes resisting the loss of buildings that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area. Heritage assets are again protected within these design policies.

The existing building is only partially visible from the High Street due the gap between the existing built form along the road for the existing vehicular access. Since the development proposes conversion of the existing building, and only minor external alterations, it is not considered that the development would detract from the character of the surrounding area and would continue to conserve and enhance this part of the AONB. The design of alterations would build sympathetically upon the distinctive architecture of the area.

In addition, views of the proposed garage within the street scene would be entirely obscured by 56 and 57 which front the High Street. As such, its visual impact would be limited, and it would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the surrounding area.

In light of the above, the proposal would comply with policy SP1 of the Core Strategy and policy EN1 and EN5 of the ADMP.

Residential Amenity of Neighbouring Properties

Policy EN2 of the ADMP requires proposals to provide adequate residential amenities for existing and future occupiers of the development. The Residential Extensions SPD recommends that a 45-degree test is undertaken for a loss of light to neighbouring dwellings, based on BRE guidance.

The neighbouring properties most likely to be affected by the proposed development are 57 High Street and 1 South Terrace.

Other neighbouring properties would be situated a sufficient distance away from the proposed development and therefore should not be adversely affected.

57 High Street

This is the neighbouring property situated immediately to the front of 58 High Street. Due to the distance between the proposed development and the neighbouring property, the proposal would not result in a harmful loss of sunlight or daylight to the habitable windows of this neighbouring property or its private amenity area (defined by the Sevenoaks Residential Extensions SPD as a depth of 5 metres from the back of the property).

Views from the ground floor windows along the front elevation would be obscured by the existing brick boundary wall and garage of this neighbouring property.

It is noted that a front dormer is also proposed which would face towards 57 High Street. However, there is a sufficient distance of separation to ensure that no direct overlooking towards the first-floor rear windows of the neighbouring property, or its private amenity area, would occur. Any view would also be at an oblique angle due to the location of the dormer window. As such, the proposal would not result in a harmful loss of privacy for this neighbouring property.

With regards to outlook, views of the proposed development from the ground floor rear windows 57 High Street would be obscured by the existing boundary landscaping and the garage of 57 High Street.

1 South Terrace

The proposed development would not result in a harmful loss of light to any habitable windows of 1 South Terrace or its private amenity area.

Similar to the above, views from the ground floor windows towards 1 South Terrace would be obscured by the existing boundary treatments.

Due to the distance of separation, the proposed front dormer window would not directly overlook the main windows of this neighbouring property or its private amenity area. Any views would also be at an oblique angle. As such, the proposal would not result in a harmful loss of privacy for this neighbouring property. In terms of outlook, it is not considered that the proposal would result in a harmful change in outlook or visual intrusion for 1 South Terrace.

The first-floor rear windows of this neighbouring property already overlook the existing development and built forms to the rear. An open outlook would also be retained for this neighbouring property towards their own rear garden. Considering the above, the development would safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupants of nearby properties in accordance with policy EN2 of the ADMP.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy EN2 also requires that the occupants of future development benefit from good standards of amenity. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Furthermore, paragraph 174 states that planning decisions should prevent new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of noise pollution.

It is noted that under 11/02671/FUL, The Council's Environmental Health team raised concern regarding potential contamination based upon the history of the site and the former use of 58 High Street. Council's Environmental Health team during the course of the previous application 22/02844, were satisfied that the survey provided for 11/02671/FUL could be relied upon and the conditions referred to above could be repeated upon any future grant of planning permission and we are happy to accept this as part of any approval.

Parking and Highways Impact

Policy EN1 states that all new development should provide satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provide adequate parking. Policy T2 of the 12 ADMP and its associated appendix sets out the parking standards for residential developments.

There would be enough parking to cater for the existing dwelling, 56 High Street, and the proposed development in accordance with policy T2 of the ADMP.

No changes are proposed to the existing access and therefore no concerns are raised in relation to highways and pedestrian safety.

Conclusion

The proposal would conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the AONB and would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the surrounding area. The proposal would not harm the setting and significance of the listed buildings. As such, the proposal would comply with policy SP1 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy and policies EN1, EN4 and EN5 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.