
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 May 2017

by J Ayres BA Hons, Solicitor

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 24th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/W/17/3168914

Sibery Oast, Blue House Farm, Battle Lane, Marden, Kent TN12 9AN

- 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 Jason Kitchen against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 15/502424/FULL, dated 26 March 2015, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as the "addition of new rooflight windows, enclosing rear conservatory and other minor alterations".
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the relocation of a window to the first floor elevation, the infilling of a covered area to the rear including the installation of three sets of doors, the removal of the existing blank door panel at first-floor level to the front elevation and the installation of six rooflights at Sibery Oast, Battle Lane, Marden, Kent TN12 9AN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 15/502424/FULL, dated 26 March 2015.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal was described in greater detail in the Council's decision notice as "the relocation of a window to the first floor elevation, the infilling of a covered area to the rear including the installation of three sets of doors, the removal of the existing blank door panel at first-floor level to the front elevation and the installation of six rooflights". Having assessed the proposal I consider this to be an accurate description of the works carried out and have therefore used the Council's description in my decision.
3. The development has already been carried out and therefore permission is sought retrospectively.

Main Issues

4. The effect on the character and appearance of the non-designated heritage asset, and the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

The effect on the character and appearance of the non-designated heritage asset

5. The host dwelling is a non-designated heritage asset. It is part of a converted oast house which forms one of a cluster of buildings that have been converted to residential dwellings. This cluster sits adjacent to Blue Farm House, which is a large detached dwelling house.
6. The host dwelling is located in the open countryside within the parish of Marden. Due to the relatively flat topography of the surrounding countryside the host dwelling is highly visible within the wider location. Properties in the area tend to occupy generous plots, and are extremely individual in design. These factors contribute to a rural and open sense of space and the appeal property positively contributes to this experience.
7. On the front façade of the host dwelling a first floor window has been relocated and the first floor blank door panel has been removed. I note the conservation officer's comments relating to the use of the property being represented by the door panel. However I have not been provided with any evidence relating to the historical use of the dwelling. In my view the relocation of the first floor window and removal of the door panel have not resulted in harm to the host dwelling in respect of its visual contribution. It continues to be seen as part of a larger form, which clearly functioned as an oast house, and maintains an agricultural form and sense of purpose.
8. To the rear of the property 3 sets of glass doors have been installed to enclose a covered area. The doors are fully glazed, with dark coloured frames. They are sympathetically designed, and have a minimal impact on the property. I note that the Council's conservation officer does not object to the installation, and it is my opinion that they do not harm the character or appearance of the host dwelling.
9. On the second floor of the host dwelling a large picture style window has been installed. The style is different to other window styles in the area, and the scale appears greater due to the single pane of glass. However I do not consider this automatically harms the character of the appeal property. In respect of design, the surrounding frame is dark, similar to the façade of the property and the glazed doors at ground level. The situation of the window in the façade meets that of the ground floor doors, being located centrally, which is slightly out of balance with the first floor window. This variation, in my view, is an additional point of focus on the host dwelling, which already displays a number of different design styles, and contributes to the interest of the host dwelling. I have already acknowledged that the properties in the surrounding area are of a varied design, and the addition of this picture window contributes to that diversity.
10. In respect of the roof, 6 rooflights have been inserted. The rooflights are large in their scale, however, due to the size of the roof they not appear overly dominant. The frames used for the rooflights blend well with the roof tiles and therefore the overall design is not incongruous in its nature. I note the conservation officer's conclusion that the rooflights result in harm due to their visual impact. However, it is my opinion that due to the large, imposing form of the oast house, the rooflights do not harm the overall visual impact of the host dwelling. It continues to be seen as a strong, formidable structure, when viewed from both near and far, and therefore the rooflights do not appear overly dominant or harmful when viewed in the context of the host dwelling in its entirety.

11. As such I conclude that the works in respect of the additional rooflights allowing the roof space to be utilised comply with policy H33 of the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 in ensuring that the extension into the roofspace does not overwhelm the original form of the house. I conclude that the development in terms of its scale and design accords with policies DM1 and DM3 of the submission version of the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2016 in terms of securing good design and protecting the historic environment. I conclude that the development respects local distinctiveness and therefore complies with the design aims of the Residential Extensions Supplemental Planning Document 2009.

Effect on the character and appearance of the area

12. The host dwelling contributes in a positive way to the character of the wider area. This is in respect of both its individual visual and historic merit, and also as part of a cluster of buildings. The host dwelling can be seen from a distance, from both Maidstone Road and Battle Lane and these long distance views are reflected in the majority of properties in the wider area due to the openness of the area. The architectural style in the area varies considerably, there are traditional style dwelling houses, farm houses, converted dwellings, all contributing to the variation of styles in the area. The host dwelling continues to positively enhance this varied experience.
13. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal development complies with the aims of policy ENV 28 of the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 in respect of protecting the character and appearance of the area and policy DM34 of the submission version of the Maidstone Borough-wide Local Plan 2016 in ensuring good design principles for development in the countryside.

Conclusion

14. Having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should succeed and planning permission should be granted.

Johanna Ayres

INSPECTOR