

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 May 2017

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 02 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/D/17/3171696

Rose Cottage, Church Road, Brasted, Westerham, Kent TN16 1HY

- 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 Paul Wentzell against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application, Ref. SE/16/03669/HOUSE, dated 24 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side extension and new front entrance porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) the effect of the extension on the character and appearance of Rose Cottage and whether the character or appearance of the Brasted High Street Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced, and (ii) the effect on the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

3. I saw on my visit that as befits its name, the appeal building with its design, modest size and use of traditional external materials has the appearance of an attractive 'cottage', further enhanced by its equally attractive garden. The Officer's report correctly states that *'as viewed from the principal southern elevation the cottage possesses a picturesque composition with symmetrical windows and chimneys'*.
 4. Because of these characteristics the building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and I note that page 22 of the Brasted High Street Conservation Area Appraisal says that *'cottages in Church Road and Rectory Lane are included in the Conservation Area for their historic contribution to the character of the village'*. Both the front and the rear elevations of Rose Cottage are clearly visible from Church Road and I therefore consider it particularly important for any extension to follow the guidelines in the Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as regards scale, proportion and height, and in respect of the more detailed aspects of its design.
 5. With these factors in mind I consider that the extension would be insufficiently subservient to the host building to preserve its character and appearance as a traditional cottage, in particular (i) as a result of the proposed two thirds
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increase in its length, (ii) the continuation to all intents and purposes of the same ridge height and (iii) the minimal set back of 150mm from the front.

6. As regards design detail, I consider that the main objection is that the southern elevation of the extension would be somewhat featureless given its limited fenestration, and together with its lack of subordination this would substantially detract from the appearance of the southern elevation, in particular its existing symmetry. Whilst I also have sympathy with the Council's reservations as to the dormer not being in keeping with the cottage, on balance I consider it to be acceptable in principle, as without a window here the appearance of the rear extension would be worse. A revised design may well be acceptable.
7. I recognise that the existing building imposes substantial constraints in terms of any extension and that this in turn causes difficulties with the provision of the much needed first floor bathroom. However, I am not convinced that an alternative scheme that would be more sympathetic to the character and appearance of Rose Cottage is impossible.
8. On the first issue, I conclude that the because of its adverse effect on Rose Cottage the proposed extension would not preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. This would be in harmful conflict with Policies EN1 & EN4 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015 ('the ADMP') and Sections 7 'Requiring Good Design' & 12 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the Framework'). The proposal would also not accord with the Council's Residential Extensions SPD 2009.
9. Turning to the second issue, the Council considers that the proposal would fail to conserve and enhance the AONB in conflict with Policy EN5 of the ADMP. Whilst technically the Council may well be correct to cite this policy, bearing in mind Rose Cottage's position within the built up envelope of Brasted I do not in this case regard a conflict with a landscape policy as adding materially to the harm that would be caused by the unsatisfactory design and a failure to preserve the conservation area, with the resultant conflict with Policies EN1 & EN4.
10. Finally, returning to the conflict with Section 12 of the Framework and in particular to paragraph 134 thereof, the proposed extension would result in '*less than substantial harm*' to the significance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset. There would be a modest public benefit because an upstairs bathroom and additional floor area would improve the facilities of this small element of the local housing provision, making Rose Cottage more suitable for family accommodation. However, I do not regard this as outweighing the harm to the conservation area from this specific proposal that I have already identified.
11. Overall, and having taken account all other matters raised for the appellant, I shall dismiss the appeal.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR