
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 June 2017

by Mr Kim Bennett BSc DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/D/17/3171857

St. Martins on the Hill, Cranbrook Road, Staplehurst TN12 0ES

- 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 Dr David against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/507726/FULL, dated 2 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of single storey extensions and construction of single storey and 2 storey extensions, construction of new parking and turning area and widening of existing pedestrian gate to form new vehicular access.
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Application for Costs

1. An application for costs was made by Dr David against Maidstone Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the landscape area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property comprises a two storey detached house located on the eastern side of St. Martin's Hill and to the south of the built up area of Staplehurst. It stands in an isolated position so that there is open parkland surrounding it on three sides to the east of the road and with farmland to the west. To the north east of the site there is a road leading to Iden Manor nursing home and Woodland House which is also a health facility. The site lies within a Special Landscape Area as identified by the Council's Borough Wide Local Plan 2000 (LP).
5. The appellant argues that the Council's reference to a 118% increase in floor area is misleading because it does not take account of the demolition of existing extensions which surround the property on two sides at single storey level. Discounting those, the net difference would be a 40 % increase in the volume of the original dwelling. Taken in isolation, I agree with the appellant that such a figure would not necessarily be disproportionate, provided that the design satisfactorily integrated with the existing dwelling. However in my view that would not be the case with the design as proposed.

6. The appellant has chosen a deliberately different design approach from the existing dwelling and with different use of materials. Whilst that might be an appropriate response in some contexts, I do not consider it would be in this case, given the stand alone location of the appeal property.
7. The large gable ended form of the extension would be at odds with the interesting and largely hipped roof character of the existing property. In that respect I do not agree that some form of roof form more in character and better integrated could not be achieved, albeit challenging from a design point of view. I also do not consider that the choice of materials would be harmonious and would visually recede as the appellant suggests. On the contrary, given the size of the proposed extension, and being partially detached from the original building, particularly at first floor, it would fail to satisfactorily integrate or be subservient to, the existing dwelling and would further detract from its character as a result. In terms of detailing and window details in particular, I acknowledge that there is an assortment of window sizes on the existing building, but they are largely set within deep reveals, generally smaller in proportion and do not break through the eaves line as some of the new windows would on both the east and west elevations.
8. A combination of the above issues would in my view, result in an extension which would detract from, and fail to integrate with, the character of the existing dwelling and would cause visual harm as a result. It would also cause harm in this isolated countryside location where there are clear views of the property not only in each direction along Cranbrook Road, but also looking towards the property from the minor road to the east. From that road the property is particularly prominent and the form, massing and detailing of the east elevation in particular, would in my view, clearly not be subservient or sympathetic to the existing dwelling when viewed from that direction.
9. I acknowledge that there is a need to upgrade the existing accommodation more in keeping with current standards but that does not necessarily require the design approach adopted.
10. With regard to the widening of the pedestrian access to form a new vehicular access, I note that the highway authority raises no objections and see no reason to reach a different view.
11. For the above reasons, the proposed development would harm the character of the host property and also the area, which carries greater weight having regard to its location within a Special Landscape Area. The development would therefore fail to comply with Policies H33 and ENV 28 of the LP, emerging Policies DM1, DM34 and DM36 of the Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19) 2016, and the Council Supplementary Planning Document – 'Residential Extensions', in that it would overwhelm the form of the original house, would not relate well to its existing character and would harm the character and appearance of the local landscape area.
12. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

Kim Bennett

INSPECTOR