
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2019

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L2250/D/18/3216610

Upper Dane Farm, Elvington Lane, Hawkinge CT18 7AD

- 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 M Bates against the decision of Folkestone & Hythe District Council.
 - The application Ref Y18/1130/FH, dated 3 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 29 October 2018.
 - The development proposed is a first floor rear extension, ground floor front extension, front dormer extension and new bi-fold doors to the ground floor rear elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Development Plan comprises the Shepway District Local Plan Review March 2006 (LP) and the Shepway Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 (CS). The emerging Places and Policies Local Plan has been submitted for examination. Although the officer report indicates that no significant objections have been received to Policy HB8, I have no further details of any objections that have been made or whether there will be any main modifications to the wording of the policy. As such, I give limited weight to Policy HB8 in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwelling and the surrounding area, having regard to the location within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB).

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a semi-detached, 2-storey dwelling located in an exposed location on the northern outskirts of Folkestone in the AONB. Although small amounts of development are scattered along Elvington Lane, the predominant character of the area is rural open countryside. The house is characterised by the steep pitch of the main roof at first floor level, which is approximately 60 degrees.
 5. The ridge height of the side element would continue the ridge line of the existing property and the front elevation would be flush with the host dwelling. At the rear two projecting gables would be formed at first floor level, with approximately 40 degree roof pitches and a valley gutter in between. A monopitch-roof dormer would be formed in the front roof slope.
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6. I consider that the side addition would lack subservience to the main house and in combination with the large, unbroken front dormer would dominate the front elevation when viewed from Elvington Lane. The dormer itself would appear top-heavy and have a strong horizontal emphasis that would be markedly at odds with the vertical proportions of the existing gable.
7. At the rear the shallower pitches to the two projecting gable roofs would appear incongruous within the context of the existing steeper roof slopes. Due to the exposed position of the pair of semi-detached houses, they would have a jarring effect in short and medium distance views from Crete Road Way to the south-east, and would be harmful to the wider setting of the AONB. The imposing and prominent appearance of the extension would be in contrast to the modest proportions and appearance of the existing dwelling, which has a natural affinity within its landscape setting. The presence of the hedgerow to Elvington Lane would not provide adequate softening or screening to outweigh the harm that would arise to the countryside and AONB.
8. Cumulatively the extent of the proposals would lack architectural subtlety and the combination of various roof pitches and heights would not be cohesive, failing to reflect the character and appearance of the host property or its neighbour. Whilst the symmetry of the pair has already been altered by previous alterations, the effects of these are relatively modest, being primarily at ground floor level and thus allowing the retention of the steep pitches at first floor level. To my mind, the overall scale of the appeal proposal would result in a harmful imbalance in the symmetry of the dwellings.
9. I acknowledge those matters that have been advanced in support of the development, including the need to modernise the property, the lack of an objection on heritage grounds, creating an improved internal layout for the occupants and the absence of an objection from the Town Council. I also recognise that it would be unreasonable to expect the property to remain unchanged in perpetuity. However these arguments do not outweigh the harm to character and appearance that I have identified above.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling and the surrounding area, having regard to the location of the site in the AONB. Consequently it would fail to comply with the requirements of saved policies SD1, BE1, BE8, CO21 and CO1 of the LP and Policies DSD and CSD4 of the CS. Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that development promotes a high quality of design, does not visually dominate or substantially alter the character of the existing dwelling and protects the natural beauty of the AONB. The scheme would also be inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
11. I note that the adjoining occupier made a number of comments on the proposed development but as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons I make no further comments on those matters.

Conclusion

12. Having regard to the above and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Hall

INSPECTOR