



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 August 2019

by Thomas Bristow BA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/D/19/3233501

69 Kings Stone Avenue, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3FJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Geoff Pownall against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/19/0163, dated 23 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is a rear first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a rear first floor extension at 69 Kings Stone Avenue, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3FJ in accordance with the terms of the application Ref DC/19/0163, dated 23 January 2019, subject to the schedule of conditions below.

Preliminary matters

2. Noting the planning history to No 69,¹ each proposal must be determined on its merits in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the development plan includes policies of the Horsham District Planning Framework (adopted 27 November 2015, the 'HDPF'). I have also had regard to various other material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and the Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG'). I understand Steyning Parish Council's work preparing a neighbourhood plan is not yet sufficiently advanced such that it may be accorded significant weight.
3. In brief, HDPF policies 32 and 33 seek to ensure that development integrates appropriately with its surroundings, including in respect of its scale, relationship to neighbouring properties, and with regard to the amenity of those nearby. Similarly NPPF paragraph 127 sets out that planning should seek to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character and that a high standard of amenity for all is maintained. That is reiterated in the PPG.²

Main issues

4. Against the context above, the main issues are the effect of the proposal in respect of (i) local character and appearance, (ii) the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring No 67.

¹ An extension permitted in 1972 (Ref UB/48/72).

² Including at Reference ID: 26-024-20140306.

5. Reasons

Character and appearance

6. No 69 is a detached two storey property, with accommodation at first floor within the slope of the roof. It appears roughly mid-twentieth century in origin, or slightly earlier. Nearby properties tend to date from a similar era. There is therefore some consistency in design and arrangement. In particular roofs are relatively steeply sloping, hipped or half hipped, and finished in small russet tiles (reflecting a typology typical of the wider area). As with No 69, properties in the immediate vicinity are detached, set within plots of comparable size along a consistent building line, with regular spacing between one another.
7. Kings Stone Avenue represents part of the eastern edge of the built form of Steyning. The topography declines significantly beyond the rear gardens of properties on the same side of the Avenue as No 69, such that the public footpath running behind is sunken in the landform. There are therefore expansive views of the rolling countryside eastwards from within properties and their gardens, and also, glimpsed views between side elevations of dwellings. Rear gardens are typically well established with mature planting. There are hedgerows and mature trees beyond. The area therefore has an ordered, open and verdant character.
8. The proposal is to extend the property by way of an extension at first floor level above the existing single storey extension. That would maintain the line of the side elevations to the property and the angle of its half-hipped roof (aside from a central monopitched element). Mathematically that would add to the size of No 69 compared to present, particularly relative to No 67 (a bungalow). The extension would also be visible from Kings Stone Avenue, and also likely to some extent from within the gardens of neighbouring properties. I therefore acknowledge the Council's position that the development proposed would result in some change, and that the overall bulk of No 69 that would result would be greater than various properties nearby.
9. Nevertheless, relative to that of the existing dwelling, the floorspace proposed would be modest. The extension would be built upon rather than introduce an entirely new element of the property. In its overall design, form and the materials proposed, the scheme would tie in with the character of the existing dwelling rather than contrast with it. Moreover, in my view, the additional bulk resulting from the proposal would be visible only fleetingly and partially rather than being readily apparent. That is as the extension would be obscured from view by the form of neighbouring properties along the Avenue from certain vantage points, or by the established planting, trees, and other boundary features within neighbouring gardens.
10. I also saw how the topography declines from No 67 to No 69. Consequently, even though the former is a bungalow, its roof would impede views of the proposed extension when approaching from the north to some extent. When viewed from the south it is notable that neighbouring No 71 has been extended by way of a substantial part two storey rear extension. The scheme before me would broadly reflect that extension in overall scale. Given the step-down from rear gardens to the path beyond, and vegetation in between, the development proposed would furthermore be barely perceptible from vantage points in that

direction. Therefore, although the rear elevation proposed has a simple contemporary form, that would nevertheless be largely obscured from view.

11. Moreover I saw that, notwithstanding certain commonalities described above, properties along Kings Stone Road are variable in their scale and how they have been modified over time to accommodate the changing preferences of occupants. No 75, for example, has a substantial two-storey side extension which effectively continues the line of its original principal elevation. No 59, a semi-detached bungalow, has been altered by way of provision of dormer windows in its front and side roof slopes. There is also no clear consistency to the rear elevations of properties along the eastern side of Kings Stone Avenue, which have been altered piecemeal and individually.
12. Set in that context the development proposed would have very little appreciable effect. It would not be of such a scale or degree of prominence so as to appear discordant. As such it would not unduly affect the underlying characteristic harmony, openness or verdant character of the area. I therefore conclude that the proposal would integrate appropriately with local character and appearance in compliance with the relevant provisions of HDPF policies 32 and 33 and NPPF paragraph 127 referenced above.

Living conditions

13. Matters such as whether an acceptable level of outlook or natural light would be maintained as a result of development are inevitably context specific, benchmarked against the prevailing nature of an area. Consequently, to some extent, my reasoning in respect of character and appearance has a bearing in relation to living conditions. As set out above the proposal would represent a relatively modest addition to an existing property that would relate appropriately to it. It would also respect the prevailing spacing between houses along Kings Stone Avenue in the context of variances in scale. It is not uncommon for single storey dwellings to be located next to two storey properties (or, in the case of No 73, to fall between two).
14. First floor windows within side elevations are also commonplace, as is already the case of Nos 69, 71 and 75. In any event the new first floor north-facing windows are intended to serve bathrooms, and are therefore likely to be obscured or screened for privacy. Moreover they face towards the roof slope of No 67, which on that plane contains no roof lights. The new south-facing window would be sufficiently offset from the first floor window at No 71 such that an appropriate degree of respective privacy would be maintained.
15. Given the topography and nature of the surroundings, naturally the eye would be drawn to expansive eastwards countryside views through the Juliette balcony rather than obliquely downwards towards neighbouring gardens. Being based on the existing footprint of the ground floor extension, the scheme is unlikely to have any significant effect on boundary features, trees or vegetation directly. I saw, particularly between Nos 69 and 67 but not exclusively, that there is well-established planting that offers strong natural screening.
16. Whilst No 69 falls to the south-west of No 67, in my view the proposal would have little appreciable effect on overshadowing. For much of the day the extension proposed would have no direct effect on blocking sunlight to property

or garden, given the sun's path through the sky. I saw at the time of my site visit around 0900 that boundary features in gardens and trees nearby played a far more significant role in impeding sunlight reaching the garden than would be the case of the extension proposed. That is particularly as, again, the extension would be comparatively modest and its roof form half-hipped, minimising its bulk closest to the neighbouring boundary. Any effects would, in my view, be off-set by the open aspect towards the east.

17. Undoubtedly there would be some effect of the proposal to the living conditions of No 67. Even relatively minor changes may affect individuals' perceptions. However, for the above reasons, the proposal would not result in development that would have undue effects in terms of outlook, a sense of enclosure or in relation to natural light compared to that which is characteristic of the area. I therefore conclude that no conflict arises with the relevant provisions of HDPF policy 33 or of NPPF paragraph 127.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons I conclude, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the NPPF, and all other relevant considerations, that the appeal should be allowed subject to the schedule of conditions below.

Conditions

19. I have imposed conditions requiring compliance with the supporting plans and that matching materials are used in the extension as in the existing building. Those are to ensure that the development, as implemented, accords with that assessed above and integrates appropriately with its surroundings.

Thomas Bristow

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with approved plans 02 and 04.
- 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.