
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 May 2020

by Guy Davies BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B1415/D/19/3242997

1A Park Wood Road, Hastings TN34 2RN

- 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 Brian Scollay against the decision of Hastings Borough Council.
 - The application Ref HS/FA/19/00188, dated 1 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing flat roof and the construction of a new mansard roof extension to provide two bedrooms with ensuite showers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area, and
 - the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers at 1 Park Wood Road in terms of outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The site lies close to the junction of Park Wood Road with The Ridge. Properties fronting The Ridge are generally two storeys high. Three new dwellings have recently been built fronting The Ridge and backing onto the appeal site. These dwellings are two storeys in height with dormer windows in their front roof slopes. Park Wood Road in contrast consists mainly of bungalows or chalet bungalows with rooms in their pitched roofs. Its wide grass verges together with well maintained front gardens gives the road an open, verdant character.
4. In this context, the building at 1A Park Wood Road is something of an anomaly. It is of a different form and design to other properties in the area and sits on a shorter, narrower plot than those in Park Wood Road. It is also sited further forward than other properties in Park Wood Road, albeit no further forward than the side elevation of the new corner property fronting The Ridge.

5. The design of the proposed new roof extension bears no resemblance to any roof form in the surrounding area. It fails to reflect the fully pitched roofs of buildings fronting The Ridge including the three new houses, or the styles of roofs of properties in Park Wood Road which are of varying designs but are still all fully pitched. There is an example of a mansard roofed dwelling at 8 Park Wood Road but this differs from the proposed development in that it is pitched to a ridge and remains of a similar height to its neighbours.
6. Because the appeal property is different from others in the vicinity, having a different roof form would not necessarily be harmful so long as it was well designed. However, in my view that is not the case here. The proportions of the roof are ungainly, it would retain a large element of flat roof that would be apparent from the road, and the raised eaves would give the upper floors an elongated and top heavy appearance.
7. The cedar cladding would provide some visual interest but would not in my opinion overcome the poor design of the building as proposed. I note that the design of the current roof has caused problems in itself, and that a fully pitched roof would not provide the internal space sought by the appellant but these are not reasons that justify a poorly designed replacement roof form.
8. Guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework advises that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area. As the proposed roof extension would be neither visually attractive nor reflect the roof styles in the vicinity, it would appear incongruous and harmful to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to this guidance and in conflict with Policy DM1 of the Hastings Development Management Plan 2015 which seeks to promote good design.

Living conditions

9. The appeal property is separated from 1 Park Wood Road by the width of its driveway, and the bungalow at 1 Park Wood Road is also separated from the common side boundary by the width of its garage.
10. Although the two storey building at 1A Park Wood Road is taller than the bungalow at 1 Park Wood Road, and would be taller still with the roof extension, the level of separation and the respective positions of the two properties are such as to avoid any harmful sense of dominance or loss of outlook from the adjacent property. The roof extension would be seen from the flank elevation of the adjacent property and from the front and rear gardens, but such a relationship is not uncommon in residential areas between dwellings, and I do not consider it would be oppressive or unusual here.
11. Consequently, I find that the development would not cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of 1 Park Wood Road and the proposal would accord with Policy DM3 of the Hastings Development Management Plan 2015, which seeks to protect the amenities of existing and future residents.

Other Matters

12. The roof extension would have the benefit of improving the thermal insulation properties of house. While that may be the case, it does not justify allowing development that would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area.

13. It is argued that the extension is needed to enable the appellant, who is in poor health, to be looked after by his son who currently occupies the property. I have sympathy for the appellant's situation, but his personal circumstances do not outweigh the planning considerations in this case as the development would remain well after those personal circumstances had changed.

Conclusion

14. While I have found no harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers at 1 Park Wood Road, I do consider there would be harm caused to the character and appearance of the area by the poor design of the roof extension, and therefore conflict with the Hastings Development Management Plan 2015 taken as a whole.
15. For that reason, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Guy Davies

INSPECTOR