
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 January 2021

by Martin Small BA (Hons) BPI DipCM MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/20/3262492

21 Downsview Road, Lower Willingdon, BN20 9PT

- 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 Leigh Bradbury against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2020/0965F, dated 15 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is alteration to existing pitched roof to create gable end and loft conversion with dormers to the rear.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form. However, the drawings submitted with the application show a proposed new porch and I note that both the Council's decision notice and the appellant's appeal form refer to a proposed porch. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined this appeal on the basis of the drawings.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

4. Downsview Road is part of a mature residential area with semi-detached bungalows to one side of the road and 2-storey semi-detached dwellings to the other, reflecting the mix of properties in the wider area. The regularly spaced plots and dwellings set back from the road provide a consistent pattern of development.
5. Many of the roofs of these dwellings have been altered in some way as evidenced by the appellant's comprehensive survey of properties in the surrounding area and my observations during my site visit. Nevertheless, pitched and hipped roofs predominate and are characteristic of the area. Moreover, notwithstanding erosion by alterations to individual properties, there remains a significant degree of symmetry in the pairs of dwellings, which adds to the character of the area.

6. The appeal property is a semi-detached bungalow sited on the corner of Downsview Road and Oldfield Avenue. Oldfield Avenue terminates in a turning circle just beyond the junction. As a result of its position the property is prominent with the side and rear of the roof being clearly visible from Oldfield Avenue. The property has been previously extended to the side and partly to the rear under a pitched roof to the side with a slightly lower ridge line than the original dwelling and a flat roof with a false pitch to the rear. The pitched roof is hipped, reflecting the original roof profile.
7. The proposal is principally to provide first floor accommodation in the property by raising the ridgeline to match that of the original dwelling, creating a gable end and constructing a flat-roofed dormer to the rear. These works would significantly alter the profile and appearance of the dwelling.
8. The proposed rear dormer would run across virtually the full width of the extended dwelling being set in only slightly from the neighbouring property and the new gable end. It would also be of significant depth and height, partially extending beyond the original rear elevation of the dwelling over the existing rear extension and rising to the original ridgeline. Overall, therefore, the proposed dormer would be of substantial bulk with the full extent of its large side and rear elevations visible from Oldfield Avenue.
9. The dormer would almost completely obscure the original roof and dominate the existing dwelling. The substantial area of flat roof would be incongruous with the prevailing characteristic roof forms of the property and area. In these respects, the proposed dormer would not accord with the guidance in the Wealden Design Guide 2008 Supplementary Planning Document.
10. In addition, the proposed gable end would be clearly visible from both Downsview Road and Oldfield Avenue and increase the bulk of the dwelling as seen from these roads. The appeal dwelling is not exactly symmetrical with its adjoining property as seen from Downsview Road due to the existing extension with its slightly lower ridgeline. However, the hipped roof over the extension matches that of its neighbour. Consequently, the proposed gable end would significantly further reduce the symmetry of these 2 properties in the street scene of Downsview Road.
11. Furthermore, from my observations, fibre cement cladding is not a common material in the area and its use for the dormer would emphasise its incongruity. However, materials could be the subject of a planning condition were the development to be acceptable in all other respects. The proposed porch would be modest and in keeping with the host dwelling. It is therefore acceptable.
12. I acknowledge that other properties in the area, including the adjoining dwelling, have rear dormers and / or gable ends. However, from the photographs supplied by the appellant and my own observations, the majority of these are more discreet as the dormers appear to be smaller and their host dwellings are not in such a prominent position as the appeal property. They therefore differ from the proposal before me and do not justify its poor design. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its own merits.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and of the area. Accordingly, in this respect, it would be contrary to saved Policies EN7 and HG10 of the

Wealden Local Plan 1998. These seek to ensure that new development respects the character and local distinctiveness of an area and that, specifically for extensions to dwellings, the scale, style, design and materials are appropriate and sympathetic in relation to the existing buildings. The appellant refers to Policy SPO13 of the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)¹ which promotes local distinctiveness and good design. Given my conclusions above, I find the proposals also conflict with this policy.

14. These policies are consistent with paragraphs 124, 127 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which also promote good design and local character. Paragraph 130 specifically refers to local design standards or style guides in supplementary planning documents. The proposals thus fail to accord with these policies of the Framework.

Other Matters

Ashdown Forest

15. I am satisfied that given the nature of the proposed development it would not give rise to any likely significant effects on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation from additional recreational pressure or increased traffic movements.

Other considerations

16. I understand the appellant's desire for improved accommodation for his family and I note the appellant's reference to support for the proposals from the occupiers of the adjoining property, although no evidence of that support has been provided to me. I also acknowledge the appellant's dissatisfaction with the discussions with the Council. However, none of these considerations are sufficient to outweigh the conflict with the development plan I have identified above.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to the other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Small

INSPECTOR

¹ Wealden District (Incorporating Part of the South Downs National Park) Core Strategy Local Plan