



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 23 June 2021

by S M Holden BSc (Hons) MSc CEng MICE CTPP FCIHT MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/D/21/3271450

Fishers Oast, Fishers Road, Staplehurst TN12 0DD

- 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 Stewart Mungeam against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/500050/FULL, dated 6 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is a first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Fishers Oast is a former agricultural building that was converted into residential use following the grant of planning permission over thirty years ago. As a former oast house it has significance as a vernacular and quintessentially Kentish building. It has a two-storey rectangular element to the rear of the kiln and a small single-storey side extension with a mono-pitched roof. Its scale, layout and use of traditional materials all contribute to making it an attractive and distinctive historic building. Although it is not listed it therefore has significance as a non-designated heritage asset.
4. When the building was converted it was within the context of the surrounding rural area. However, this has now fundamentally changed with the construction of a suburban residential development of two-storey series to the northwest of the site and a series of bungalows in Whitwick Close. However, the bungalow's modest proportions ensure that Fishers Oast is the most prominent building within the street scene. It is therefore a focal point of interest within the whole development.
5. The existing two-storey element to the rear of the kiln, which is visible from the street, and is of similar width to the kiln. This combination of scale and position gives it a subservient appearance with the kiln being the dominant feature. The proposal to replace the single-storey side extension with a taller and more bulky extension would significantly disrupt the relationship between these two elements of the building resulting in an erosion and diminution of its original form. This would be harmful to its historic character and appearance.

6. The height and angle of the roofslope of the single-storey side extension on Fishers Oast mirrors that of the bungalows on the opposite side of Wightwick Close. The newer development has therefore responded positively to the existing form of Fishers Oast. It has ensured an effective pleasing integration of this new development with the former agricultural building. This has reinforced the prominence of the original building within the street scene. The loss of the mono-pitched roof and its replacement with a two-storey side extension with a hipped roof would erode this relationship to an unacceptable degree. It would also introduce a sense of enclosure into Wightwick Close and be harmful to the wider street scene.
7. I accept that the building would retain its prominence in the now suburban rather than rural surroundings if the proposal was implemented. However, that is not a justification for permitting something which would be harmful to the existing street scene. I understand that part of the original stowage may have been lost prior to the conversion of the current building. However, evidence of its form was limited, and it is necessary for me to assess the appeal proposal in its existing context and in accordance with current planning policy.
8. For all these reasons I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. The scheme would conflict with Policies DM1, DM4 and DM9 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017 which, amongst other things, require extensions to fit unobtrusively into the existing building and to respond positively to the character of heritage assets and their local context.

Other Matters

9. I acknowledge that there would be benefits arising from the scheme insofar as its construction would contribute to the local economy. However, given the scale of the proposal these benefits would be limited. Improvements in the accommodation for current and future occupants are private benefits that carry limited weight in my assessment of the proposal.
10. The existing conservatory is to the rear of the building and within the enclosed garden. It is not visible from the street and therefore its removal would not offset the harm I have identified to the host property or the surrounding area.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the extension would be contrary to the development plan. There are no other considerations, including the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, to indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
12. For this reason, the appeal is dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR