

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2021

**by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

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## **Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/D/21/3283575**

### **Bridle End, 1 Forge Close, Staplecross, TN32 5QF**

- 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 and Mrs C Stevens against the decision of Rother District Council.
  - The application Ref RR/2020/2161/P, dated 5 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 16 July 2021.
  - The development proposed is described as '*extensions and alterations, loft improvements with new dormers, and addition of entrance porch.*'
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## **Decision**

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## **Main Issues**

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on: - (i) the character and appearance of the appeal property and the wider street scene, and (ii) the living conditions at Streatfield Cottage, Manor Cottage and 2 Forge Close, with particular regard to visual impact.

## **Reasons**

### *Character and Appearance*

3. The appeal property is a detached, chalet-style bungalow with a prominent forward-facing timber clad gable, including a small bedroom window at first floor within the apex, and with a subservient, single-storey gabled projection to the west side, creating an L-shaped footprint to the original building. There is a flat roofed garage attached to the east side elevation with a utility room beyond. The rear roof slope rakes down from the ridge to a single-storey eaves height and has a flat roofed, box-like dormer centrally positioned. The proposal includes various elements. The single-storey side wing would be extended by projecting its existing form sideways. On the opposite side the garage and utility room would make way for a wider side extension with a ridge equivalent in height to the existing main roof and with a full, two-storey height eaves to the front and single-storey height eaves to the rear. The rear dormer

would be extended in width and a new, smaller dormer would be added to the west side of the existing main roof and a new porch to the front.

4. Despite its address, the property fronts onto Forge Lane, a narrow road comprising a mix of property types and ages. Although it has a fairly shallow frontage, the overall size of the plot enables the appeal property, which appears as a more contemporary building amongst the mix of others along Forge Lane, to sit comfortable in its setting. Forge Close, to the south and west of the appeal property is a small cul-de-sac of similar styled bungalows of broadly consistent design and appearance.
5. The extensions, when seen together, would wholesale remodel the appearance of the appeal property. The extension to the west side would simply reflect the form of the existing projection and would sit comfortably within the garden space that would surround it. The new dormer to this side would be modest in scale and would appear subservient to the roofscape within which it would sit. The porch would be modest in size and inconspicuous, and the enlarged scale of the dormer to the rear would not be excessive in relation to the scale of the enlarged roof slope that would be created. Individually, these component parts of the appeal proposal would be physically and visually subservient to the original building.
6. On the other hand, the extension to the east side would be significantly more visually imposing. The chalet style form of the original building would be lost in favour of a two-storey wing that would run contiguous with the existing front elevation. The building would have a large expanse of mostly unarticulated façade, with a much more prominent emphasis upon the scale of the building at first floor and with the fenestration at this level showing little correlation with the window and door openings below. The plot's shallow frontage would further exaggerate the bulky and overly dominant scale of the east side addition when viewed within the street scene. Despite attempts on the side (east) elevation to mirror the valley form of the roof that is seen on other properties nearby, the truncated and shallow depth of the front roof pitch would be at sharp odds with the roof configuration of the original dwelling and which would remain to be seen on other parts of the building. I share the Council's view that the east side addition would add a complicated mix of roof forms that would show little cohesion as part of a comprehensive remodel of the building's appearance.
7. I recognise that the use of tile hanging as an alternative to the existing timber cladding would reflect similar materials in other buildings nearby and would be appropriate. However, my impression overall, is that the proposal would add excessive bulk to one side of the dwelling, and in a form that would be out of keeping with the scale, form, character, and appearance of the original dwelling. The result overall would be a building that would look incongruous in its own right, and out of character with the traditionally designed buildings surrounding it. In this regard there would be clear conflict with criteria (ii) and (vi) of Policy DHG9: *Extensions, Alterations and Outbuildings* of the Council's Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (DSALP), which require, amongst other things, extensions, and alterations to dwellings to respond positively to the design, character, and appearance of an original dwelling and to be physically and visually subservient. For these same reasons there would be conflict with part (iii) of Policy OSS4: *General Development Considerations* of

the Council's Core Strategy (CS), which seeks to ensure that development does not detract from the character or appearance of the locality, and CS Policy EN3: *Design Quality* which requires high quality design.

### *Living Conditions*

8. The appeal property occupies a plot on the corner of Forge Lane with Forge Close. The rear boundary of the appeal site runs common with the side boundary to No 2 Forge Close and is marked by an approximate 1.8m high close boarded fence. No 2 has a side glazed porch that extends almost up to the boundary between both plots and has an obscurely glazed window set deeper along the side elevation.
9. The extension to the west side of No 1 Forge Close would remain to be set some distance away from the rear boundary of the site. The separation distance between Nos 1 and 2 would remain the same as existing. The principal outlooks from No 2 Forge Close are to the front and rear of that property and would be unaffected by any of the proposed extensions. Whilst there would be a larger extent of built form to No 1 that would be seen in any outlook from the side of No 2, I am not persuaded that its presence would be overbearing to a degree that would materially impact upon the living conditions at 2 Forge Close.
10. Streatfield and Manor Cottages are a semi-detached pair of Grade II listed dwellings to the east side of the appeal site. Their rear boundaries are common with the east side boundary of the appeal site. According to undisputed figures provided by the appellants, Streatfield Cottage has a rear garden depth of around 9.5m and Manor Cottage has a rear garden depth of around 7m. In my estimate there would be space between the skewed orientation of the side elevation of the proposed extension to east side of No 1 of an approximate similar range. In addition, the side elevation of No 1 would remain to be fairly shallow in depth, and with an eaves height at around 1½-storeys, the roof slope above would pitch away from these neighbouring dwellings. Despite the elevated ground levels of the appeal site in relation to the two adjoining cottages, and the obvious encroachment of built form towards them, due to the separation distances involved, I am not persuaded that the proposal would be seen as being overbearing or visually intrusive in the outlook from either Streatfield Cottage or Manor Cottage.
11. There is no substantive evidence before me to support suggestions by the adjoining occupiers that daylight and sunlight to these neighbouring properties, including their gardens, would be materially affected.
12. Overall, for the reasons given, I am satisfied that there would be no harm to the living conditions of any adjoining occupiers. As such, I find no conflict with DSALP Policy DHG9 insofar as criterion (i) seeks to protect the amenities of adjoining properties in terms of light, massing and overlooking, or the similar aims of CS Policy OSS4 criterion (ii).

### *Other Matters*

13. I have a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the two adjoining listed buildings at Streatfield Cottage and Manor Cottage. The dwellings enjoy a cottage garden setting to the front and

an enclosed garden setting to the rear. These would not change. The rear elevations of the cottages can be seen from Forge Lane, but in the context of the more contemporary development beyond their rear boundaries. Despite the proposed enlargement of No 1, this would not change. Overall, I am satisfied that Streatfield Cottage and Manor Cottage would remain to be seen within the context of their own garden settings. I am satisfied that there would be no impact upon the setting of these adjoining listed buildings that would alter their significance as individual heritage assets. These conclusions reflect those of the Council.

### **Conclusions**

14. Despite my findings as they relate to the effect of the proposal upon the living conditions of adjoining occupiers, for the reasons given, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of No 1 Forge Close and the wider street scene.
15. I am mindful that the proposed extensions have been driven by the applicants' need to enlarge their living space to support their growing family. However, that need does not outweigh the harm that I have identified. The failure of the proposal to achieve an appropriate level of design that would add to the overall quality of the area means that there would be conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed places. As such the development would not meet the environmental objectives for achieving a sustainable form of development. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

*John D Allan*

INSPECTOR