



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2022

by J E Jolly BA (Hons) MA MSc MCIH MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/D/21/3279914 Sobraon, Church Lane, Iden TN31 7XD

- 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 Christopher Vane against the decision of Rother District Council.
 - The application Ref RR/2021/382/P, dated 19 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is for alterations to existing dwelling, including replacing existing single-storey extensions with new single-storey extensions, new cladding and windows, and alteration of roof form.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Government published a revised *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) in July 2021. All references to the Framework in this decision relate to the updated document.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area, including the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located near to the Domesday settlement of Iden and is found behind a tree lined, hedged and fenced boundary on Church Lane. The detached, two-storey host dwelling of 'Sobraon' is a bespoke, pitched-roof property that is set to one side of a spacious 'wrap-around' plot. From within the plot views of the surrounding properties, fields/grazed meadows and the wider AONB can be seen.
5. The character of the built environment in the immediate surrounding area is typified by traditional style, two-storey, pitched-roofed dwellings. The dwellings are varied in style and include a range of thatched, timber-board, rendered and tile hung properties with casement-type windows. For example, but not limited to, the Grade II listed buildings of the Iden Stores and Post Office, Bell Cottage, Church Cottage, Park House, Church/Forge House, and Park Farmhouse. The newer dwellings and terraces found within the cul-de-sac of 'Parkwood' opposite the appeal site also have visual elements of this older-style built form.

6. The proposal is to replace the existing single-storey extension with a new single-storey extension. The existing garage would be demolished and the host dwelling would be re-worked in order to construct a flat-roofed dwelling that would have new fenestration and horizontal and vertical timber cladding with a powder-coated aluminium parapet atop. There would be a covered canopy to the front and a timber pergola.
7. The appellant has brought to my attention a dwelling nearby that has been re-clad in natural timber and black zinc¹ in support of his case. Additionally, the nearby Bell Public House and the commercial buildings on Wittersham Road have been highlighted by the appellant as buildings that have flat roofs. The appellant has also submitted a number of images that show a range of contemporary timber-clad properties that have been constructed within the AONB and/or within the Rother District Council area. However, I have limited details of those schemes before me, some of which appear to be in a different type of location to the appeal site altogether. Therefore, I have considered the proposal on its own planning merits.
8. As such, the development would be in the AONB. Therefore, for planning purposes the proposal is located in the countryside. Therefore, the development should conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB as required by Paragraph 176 of the Framework, to which I attach great weight. Moreover, the development must comply with the relevant Rother District Council development plan policies to be permitted.
9. I acknowledge that the development would be lower in height than the existing dwelling and would be mostly clad in traditional-type materials. However, whether the proposal would harm the setting of the numerous heritage assets nearby or not, the two-storey proposal would be located in a prominent location on Church Lane. Consequently, the hard lines of the bulky and box-like flat-roofed proposal would jar with the traditional-style pitched-roofed properties adjacent to and opposite the appeal site. Indeed, the contemporary style doors and windows, the timber pergola, and the protuberant and extensive canopy to the front of the proposed development would be highly incongruous and hence, in my view, would harm the character and appearance of the area.
10. Moreover, even if additional landscaping to the front of the dwelling could be secured by condition, I cannot be certain that it would not come under threat from future occupiers with a preference for a different type of boundary treatment who might later seek to have the condition removed. Furthermore, notwithstanding the existing trees, hedging and other boundary treatments, the fact remains that the proposal would be visible from the properties and the wider AONB to the rear of the appeal site. Additional landscaping, such as wild-flower planting, a reduction in the overall hard-surfacing associated with the host dwelling, or potential alterations to the front boundary access would not provide adequate mitigation.
11. I conclude therefore, even if only glimpsed from the road or the wider views to the rear, that the proposed development would appear as an alien and inharmonious structure when compared to the older and more traditional-style dwellings seen on Church Lane and the wider Domesday village. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would harm the scenic beauty of the AONB.

¹ RR/2020/2459/P

12. I conclude therefore, that the proposal would be contrary to Policies OSS4, RA2, RA3, EN1 and EN3 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, Policies DHG9, DHG11, DEN1 and DEN2 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan 2018, as supported by Objective S3 of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and the High Weald Housing Design Guide.
13. For similar reasons, the proposal does not meet the requirements of Paragraphs 130 and 176 of the Framework, which aims include that developments should be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

Other Matters

14. I note the support of the Parish Council for the proposal. As suggested by the appellant, I have also given consideration to the aesthetic merit of the proposed development in comparison to the host dwelling and the newer properties nearby, the quality of the materials proposed and its sustainability potential. However, even when considered in combination, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have found above.

Conclusions

15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J E JOLLY

INSPECTOR