



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 September 2022

by J Reid BA(Hons) BArch(Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/D/22/3295741

School House, London Road, Balcombe RH17 6HS

- 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 M Southern and Mrs M Southern against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/21/3913, dated 9 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is Two storey extension to the north of the property, single storey side extension to the south of the property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Reasons

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Balcombe Conservation Area.
3. The appeal dwelling includes a C19 stone built dwelling, which was historically related to the school of similar age next door to roughly south, and previous extensions to it. The original school has also been extended, but its extensions are largely subservient to the historic building.
4. The Conservation Area is mainly characterised by historic buildings in a range of ages and styles around the village core where Bramble Hill meets Haywards Heath Road and in London Road, and good-sized dwellings in spacious plots set back from leafy streets including Stockcroft Road and Oldlands Avenue. The building forms and styles, use of traditional building materials, and greenery within the village and its setting are important to its appearance. The surrounding undulating countryside contributes positively to the setting of the heritage asset, and to its significance as a historic rural settlement. Due to their character and appearance, the appeal dwelling and the school, individually and together, make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
5. The nearby land slopes down from roughly east to west, so the appeal dwelling is a little lower than London Road. Whilst its existing back outshoot is 2 storeys tall, its ridge is a little lower than that of the main range of the historic dwelling to roughly east. The existing dwelling is subservient to the school, and like the school, its historic scale, form and character are important to the nearby views from London Road, Haywards Heath Road, and the roughly triangular green opposite.

6. Similar single storey extensions to those proposed to the south and north of the back outshoot have been permitted by the Council. The proposal would also include a first floor extension to the proposed north wing. That wing would be about as deep as the existing dwelling, but it would extend roughly northwards well beyond the north side of the historic dwelling.
7. Due to its scale, form, design and siting, the proposal would have a discordant bulky appearance that would be harmfully at odds with the simple form, modest scale, and historic character of the original dwelling. Parts of the historic dwelling would still be seen, but because it would include a complex of modern extensions on 3 sides of its back outshoot, its modest scale and subservient historic character, on its own and in relation to the school, would be unacceptably damaged.
8. Whilst the proposal would be partially screened by the intervening vegetation within and beyond the site, due to its scale and bulk at first floor level and above, it would be harmfully prominent in views from roughly north east along London Road. Because the planting outside the site is not controlled by the appellants, and as most planting within it could not reasonably be controlled by condition for more than a few years, it could not be relied upon to partly screen the development in the long term.
9. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. The ensuite, larger bedroom and larger roof space would be private benefits for the occupiers. Whilst the public benefits would include a little more employment and local spending during construction than the permitted scheme, they would not be enough to outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage asset. Moreover, insufficient clear and convincing justification has been put to me to explain why the proposal would be necessary to conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
10. Therefore, I consider that the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. It would be contrary to Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 which seeks high quality design and respect for context, Policy 3 of the Balcombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031 which aims for the scale of alterations to existing buildings to reflect the architectural and historic character and scale of the surrounding buildings, LP Policy DP35 which reflects the thrust of the statutory duty regarding conservation areas, and advice in the Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. It would also be contrary to the Framework which aims for heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

Conclusion

11. I have found that the proposed development would be contrary to the Development Plan when taken as a whole. The other considerations in this case, including the Framework, do not outweigh that conflict.
12. For the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Reid

INSPECTOR