



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2023

by A James BSc (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/22/3304906

Quarry Brook, Cade Street, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8RE

- 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 Ms Judy Austin against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2022/0786/F, dated 24 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 22 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is single storey side extension to create a new kitchen, dining and living room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the host property, which is a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a 2 storey detached dwelling, which is sited within a large plot. The dwelling is set back from the highway, on lower land. The ground floor of the front elevation is partially screened from the public realm by an existing hedge. Nevertheless, the dwelling is prominent from the road frontage. The land slopes steeply to the rear, with few trees interrupting views of the back of the house. The property is a focal point in the landscape and highly prominent in views from Halley Road.
4. The surrounding landscape is predominantly in agricultural use. Fields are bounded by mature hedgerows with areas of woodland. There is sporadic residential development, including the appeal property, which mostly have a traditional rural character and appearance and contribute positively to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
5. Opposite the site is a leisure centre and college, which are partially screened by mature trees. Given the tree screening and changes in level, these buildings are not readily apparent from Halley Road. Consequently, when viewed from Halley Road, the appeal property is appreciated in its rural landscape, with a backdrop of mature trees.

6. The dwelling's significance as a non-designated heritage asset derives from its simple overall form, traditional double pile roof, prior association with agriculture and its contribution to the history of the area.
7. The proposed extension has been designed to appear as an attached outbuilding that would be subservient to the host property, with a lower roof form and set back front elevation. I acknowledge the factors that have led to the design of the proposal and the appellant's endeavours to keep the floor area within the guidelines set out within the Wealden Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). However, the width of the proposed extension would be significantly greater than the guidelines set out within the SPD and would appear visually disproportionate. Furthermore, the proposed log store would be in line with the existing front building line, so the designed set back would not be appreciated.
8. I recognise the appellant's desire to limit the amount of fenestration on the front elevation to minimise traffic noise. However, the catslide roof design, provision of a log store and large expanse of brickwork would appear incongruous and out of place on this principal elevation. The proposed extension would effectively turn its back on the street scene and would fail to respect the simple and traditional form of the host building.
9. In addition, the proposal would extend further back than the existing rear building line and its L shape, with differing roof forms would appear discordant and fail to respect the dwelling's simple form. Taking into consideration the existing soft landscaping, the extension would appear highly prominent from Halley Road and would be an incongruous and discordant feature, which would be incompatible with the character of the existing dwelling. In views from the surrounding landscape the extension would look harmfully out of place.
10. The proposal would replace an existing outbuilding. The outbuilding is modest in size and its design complements the existing dwelling. Demolition of the existing outbuilding and the presence of the leisure centre and college, with tree screening, does not justify the harm that I have identified.
11. I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling as a non-designated heritage asset, the area and the High Weald AONB. The proposed development would conflict with Spatial Planning Objectives SPO1 and SPO2 of Wealden District (Incorporating Part of the South Downs National Park) Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 and saved Policies DC19 and EN27 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998, which seek to respect local distinctiveness, protect and enhance the district's landscapes and protect the historic environment. In addition, the proposal would conflict with the Wealden Design Guide 2008 SPD, which requires that extensions are sympathetic to original dwellings.
12. The above policies are consistent with the Framework, which seeks to achieve well-designed places, protect and enhance valued landscapes and conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Other Matters

13. The appellant argues that they could extend the property to the rear under permitted development, which in their view would be more visually intrusive.

The Council has also suggested an alternative design. However, there are no such schemes before me to consider.

14. The appellant considers that the biggest impact on the AONB is the large number of new dwellings being built. However, there is limited information on these properties or their locations for me to consider this point further. Such development was also not apparent in the immediate locality.
15. While I note that the Parish Council support the application, it does not affect my overall conclusions on this appeal.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, having regard to the development plan as a whole, the Framework and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A James

INSPECTOR