



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 January 2023

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/22/3310236

Ivy Cottage, Mill Lane, Ripe, Lewes BN8 6AX

- 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 R Fripp against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2022/0943/F, dated 8 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 26 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side extension and replacement porch.
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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 Ripe Conservation Area (the CA), having particular regard to the design of Ivy Cottage and its relationship to Meadow Cottage.

Reasons

3. Ivy Cottage and Meadow Cottage are a pair of relatively small semi-detached two-storey dwellings. They are in large plots in a row of generally widely spaced properties towards the edge of Ripe village and the edge of the CA, close to open countryside front and rear. They were part of Mill Farm farmstead, likely originally built for farm workers. Simple in form but with decorative brick banding, a double pile roof and end chimney stacks they are distinctive in appearance, including the date '1881' in contrasting bricks in the front end gable of Ivy Cottage. Though not identical, this pair of cottages retain much of their original symmetry and homogeneity.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework states that heritage assets, such as conservation areas, are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance; any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.
5. In this case, significance includes a more dispersed pattern of development further from the centre of the village, closer to the surrounding historic field pattern and agricultural landscape with remnants of former farmsteads or associated buildings. Though not listed buildings both cottages are a good example of this type of late Victorian development at Ripe thus maintain the appreciation and understanding of the history and evolution of the village. Individually and collectively they therefore make a positive contribution to the significance of the CA.

6. The two-storey rear elevation of Ivy Cottage is narrower than the equivalent part of Meadow Cottage. The increased width of this part of Ivy Cottage at ground and first floor levels would (apart from the roof) give a balanced appearance. The siting and floorplan of the ground floor part of the extension would be similar to the single storey side extension at Meadow Cottage.
7. However, at the front and side the extension would significantly increase the width of Ivy Cottage at first floor and roof level. Though set back behind the front elevation it would add appreciably to the scale and massing of built form in the most noticeable upper part of Ivy Cottage, detracting from its modest size and straightforward proportions. It would also be in stark contrast to the equivalent part of Meadow Cottage and give a demonstrably lopsided appearance to this pair of cottages.
8. The high level hipped roof would intrinsically be at odds with the design of the rear end gable of Ivy Cottage, which would largely be obliterated. The visual integrity and rhythm of the double pile roof would be lost and the angled inverted 'v' sequence of barge boards obscured. This part of the extension would also mask the upper side elevation below the rear end gable and break its synergy with the similar part of the building below the front end gable. This hipped roof adjunct would also plainly be inconsistent with the double pile roof at Meadow cottage and significantly erode the unity of this pleasing roof form across both properties.
9. The long, angled catslide roof slope would descend from a high ridge to a low eaves, manifestly out of keeping with the vertical emphasis of the front and side elevations and high main eaves level of both cottages. While the dormer would align vertically and horizontally with windows in Ivy Cottage and Meadow Cottage, this alien feature would be out of keeping with the style and design of the existing windows.
10. The rear chimney stack at Ivy Cottage would no longer sit next to the end of the roof, inconsistent with the position of its companion stack in the front end gable. A stack is already more centrally placed within the roof at the rear of Meadow Cottage but the proposal would disrupt the pattern and placement of chimney stacks at each double gable end and the four corners of the building taken with Meadow Cottage.
11. The ground floor would incorporate brickwork banding to match both cottages. While hung clay tiles are not unusual in the CA, used here it would be a coarse contrast to the brick upper floor of both cottages and lack the finely detailed banding. Though not physically built over, the 1881 inscription would be largely hidden from view by the proximity and size of the dormer.
12. A previous front porch has been removed. However, the sides of the replacement porch would obscure the edge of each adjacent ground floor window. The roof eaves and gutters would oversail the arched brick headers. This would give an unsatisfactory impression of the porch having been squeezed between the windows. Such an unduly tight juxtaposition would undermine the discrete placement and visually separate pattern and sequence of these windows, as also appears at Meadow Cottage, and detract from the more orderly appearance of the front elevation of Ivy Cottage.
13. Taken in isolation, the width of the extension per se and its hipped roof would not prevent views past or over Ivy Cottage from the front or back toward fields

or sky. Nor would it unduly reduce the wide gap between it and Meadow Cottage or therefore disrupt the mainly loose knit linear pattern of development along this side of Mill Lane. I also appreciate that the appellant has sought to distinguish the extension as a discrete, legible addition to Ivy Cottage and avoid a more terraced impression.

14. Nevertheless, the proposal fails to respect the most interesting and important innate historic features of the structure and fabric of Ivy Cottage and taken together with Meadow Cottage, this pair of dwellings. The design lacks sufficient architectural coherence, with dominant, unsympathetic or incongruous additions that do not integrate well with Ivy Cottage. This leads to a loss of symmetry and homogeneity and a profoundly different building that also jars with Meadow Cottage.
15. Though set back from Mill Lane, and despite the large front garden outbuilding, Ivy Cottage and Meadow Cottage are elevated above the lane in a spacious setting. As such they are conspicuous in views from the lane, especially from the lower ground to the south on the approach into the village. They are also prominent in views from the public footpath which runs past them close behind. While front and rear garden boundaries are not fully established at Ivy Cottage, these would not screen the upper parts of it or the proposal, and as seen together with Meadow Cottage, in these views.
16. I therefore find that the proposal would have a significant negative effect on the design of Ivy Cottage and undermine its relationship to Meadow cottage; appreciably diminishing the way in which both cottages would be experienced in their immediate surrounding context. This would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. Consequently, it conflicts with saved Local Plan¹ (LP) policies EN1, EN19, EN27 and DC19 and with Core Strategy² policies SPO2, SPO13 and WCS14. These policies include that development in conservation areas should be high quality in design, respect the character of an existing building, promote local distinctiveness and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The Council has also cited saved LP policy HG10 but it is not relevant because it relates to sites within defined development boundaries.

Other Matters

17. The proposal is a revised scheme seeking to overcome the Council's decision to refuse planning permission for a previous two-storey side extension and porch³. Both main parties have also referred me to a dismissed appeal decision for a new dwelling attached to Ivy Cottage⁴. While I have taken these decisions into account, I have considered the proposal, and determined the appeal, on its individual planning merits and the evidence before me.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

18. There is no objection in principle to enlargement of Ivy Cottage to enhance the living accommodation, or to a porch. The appellant also intends to upgrade the structure and fabric of the cottage and the outbuilding and improve the

¹ Wealden Local Plan December 1998

² Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan February 2013

³ WD/2021/2373/F

⁴ APP/C1435/W/193238928

appearance of the appeal site overall. These outcomes would be aligned with relevant policies of the Council's development plan.

19. However, there is conflict with the development plan. The proposal would be of limited scale in the context of the CA as a whole but would result in negative incremental change to features that contribute to its significance. The harm to the CA would be less than substantial, a matter to which I am required to give considerable importance and weight and must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, the modest economic, social and environmental public benefits from the two-storey side extension and replacement porch would not, therefore, outweigh the harm.
20. The proposal does not accord with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no other considerations to indicate that the decision should not be made otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, for the reasons given above the appeal does not succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR