



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 May 2023

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/D/23/3317330

**Sandling Cottage, 4 Sandling Place, Sandling Lane, Sandling, Maidstone
ME14 3AH**

- 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 Jack Hatt against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/505357/FULL, dated 9 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 11 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is changes to existing loft conversion to add a dormer with juliet balcony.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The dormer has been built. It has two sash windows, not the juliet balcony and the casement window shown in the submitted plans. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the development on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

4. Sandling Cottage is part of what was originally a large, two-storey Victorian house (the house). The house is a non-designated heritage asset. It has been internally sub-divided into four dwellings, including Sandling Cottage which has a loft conversion with approved conservation rooflights.
5. The significance of the house included its intact slate main hipped roofs with largely uncluttered low-pitched slopes, pentagonal in shape at ends over two-storey wings. It also has a regimented arrangement of mainly arched sash windows which are tall and narrow in proportion. Externally this homogeneity was influential to its distinctive historic and architectural vernacular character and appearance. Sandling Cottage exhibited these features and made a positive contribution to the significance of the house.
6. The dormer has been inserted into the main roof on one side of Sandling Cottage. Along its lower edge the bottom is inset behind and higher than the eaves of the main roof. However, its roof is almost level with the ridge so the dormer occupies most of this vertical space. It also stretches horizontally across most of the roof plane of this part of the building, with a front elevation

that appears closely in-line with the part below. Despite that it is clad in slate this large, abrupt protuberance of angular built form obliterates most of the original hipped roof slope. It also dominates this part of Sandling Cottage and gives an unbalanced top heavy appearance to it and this part of the house.

7. The pentagonal end of the roof has been retained physically unaltered. Nonetheless, the dormer is in such close proximity to it that its presence jars visually and undermines the symmetry of this most distinguishing part of the roof. While the house has some flat or very shallow pitched roofs, these are either small and purposefully integral to the design of turreted parts of the roof, or larger but lower down over bays at ground floor level. Whereas the flat roof design of the dormer is inherently at odds with the main roofscape of the house and is a fundamentally discordant roof form in this case.
8. Though squarer in design and proportion the sash windows are compatible in type with the windows in Sandling Cottage. While they do not line up vertically with windows below, they have been placed symmetrically in relation to those windows and are not dissimilar in appearance to some windows in the house.
9. Part of the landscaped grounds of the house have been infilled with some modern townhouses but remain enclosed by mature hedgerow, shrubs and trees. There is a distant, glimpsed upward view of the dormer from the pavement along the A229 road; though likely none at all during summer months when planting is in full leaf. In semi-public views from one side of a resident's communal car park the dormer is set back from the facing part of the house, though on higher ground and in the roof, it is nonetheless noticeable.
10. Despite the absence of greater public visibility, the dormer nonetheless fails to respect important intrinsic features of Sandling Cottage and the house. This incompatible form of development erodes the visual and physical integrity of Sandling Cottage and unduly detracts from the holistic appreciation of the house as a whole. This negative impact on the character and appearance of Sandling Cottage and the house has caused harm to the significance of this non-designated heritage asset.
11. Consequently, the development conflicts with Policies DM1, DM4 and DM9 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017. These policies include that development should respond positively to the historic character and townscape of the area and conserve the significance of heritage assets. Additionally, residential extensions should fit unobtrusively with the existing building.

Heritage and Planning Balance

12. The dormer has increased useable space in the loft conversion, which has been sub-divided into two rooms. This effective and efficient use of the building has enhanced the living conditions of the appellant and his family. These are, though, private benefits and have limited weight in favour of the dormer.
13. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that *[all]* heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. While not a listed building or in a conservation area there is unacceptable permanent harm to the significance of the heritage asset in this case, which has not been conserved. This matter in the wider public interest carries appreciable weight.
14. The benefits do not, therefore, outweigh the harm.

Conclusion

15. The development does not accord with the development plan. There are no material considerations to indicate that the decision should not be made otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
16. Consequently, for the reasons given above the development is unacceptable and the appeal does not succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR