
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 17 May 2023

by P Jackson B Arch (Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 MAY 2023

Appeal Refs: APP/U2235/W/21/3289031 & APP/U2235/Y/21/3288334 Little Hearnden, East Sutton Road, Headcorn TN27 9PS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against the refusal of applications for planning permission and listed building consent.
 - The appeals are made by Mr D Davis against the decisions of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The applications Ref 21/504703/FULL and 21/504704/LBC, dated 24 August 2021, were refused by notice dated 29 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the rear extension. Erection of a replacement single storey rear extension with basement.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Reasons

2. Planning permission and listed building consent have been granted by the Council for demolition of the rear extension and erection of a replacement single storey rear extension under refs 21/502652 and 21/502653/LBC. The revised application subject to appeal are identical but include a basement under the proposed kitchen extension, approximately 5 metres (m) by 3.5m and 3m deep (outside dimensions).
3. The main issue in both appeals is the effect of the proposed basement on the architectural character and historic interest of Little Hearnden, which is listed at Grade II.
4. The appeal property is a timber framed Wealden 'Hall' farmhouse from the end of the mediaeval period in the 15/16th century. It displays 2 hall bays and storeyed end bays with irregular window fenestration. The interior is relatively well preserved and shows that the building has adapted to the needs of successive occupiers over time without losing its essential architectural and historic interest. Later changes to provide bedroom accommodation within the hipped roof and to add kitchen accommodation at the rear have been minor in nature and in this respect the house is different from many other Hall houses that suffered more intrusive alterations and extensions by the Victorians in particular. The approved rear extension enlarges the kitchen in a subservient way to make it more practical in use without unacceptably affecting character.
5. At its heart, the house retains the vernacular form and layout of a simple and functional farmhouse. The open agricultural fields surrounding the property enhance its setting and reinforce that impression, later ancillary buildings being

sufficiently detached and utilitarian in nature to avoid detracting from understanding its uncomplicated and recognisable origins.

6. In that context, the historic layout and plan form of the house is an important part of its heritage story and that includes a ground floor on one level. A modern basement with associated stairs (and suggested trapdoor) would add a different dimension to understanding the building's origins and later very subservient alterations over several centuries. Notwithstanding that it would not be seen much of the time and situated under a new kitchen extension some 3m away from the original building, it would still be part of the layout of the listed building which would be out of keeping: and would cause a significant level of harm.
7. Referring to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the harm would fall into the category of 'less than substantial', which requires assessment of any public benefit. The proposal to use the basement for storage does not indicate a public benefit that could outweigh the harm.
8. The NPPF advises that great weight attaches to the conservation of heritage assets. There is no clear and convincing justification for the proposed basement which would be a direct physical change to the layout which would diminish the ability to appreciate and understand its simple rural origins and hierarchy of spaces, detracting from its heritage significance. As such, it would conflict with the heritage protection aims of policies DM4 and SP18 of the Maidstone Local Plan of 2017 and national guidance.

Conclusion

9. For the above reasons, the appeals should be dismissed.

Paul Jackson

INSPECTOR