



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 May 2023

by J Wellstead BA(Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/D/23/3315620

Priory Cottage, 7 Hilltop Road, West Hoathly, West Sussex RH19 4QJ

- 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 Timothy Sage against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/22/2849, dated 13 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is a rear extension at first floor with new rooflights and dormers with obscured glazing up to 1.7m from finished floor level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. On the Planning Appeal Statement, Decision Notice, Delegated Decision and Householder Application the house name 'Priory Cottage' is included in the address. On other documents it is not. I have included it here for clarity.

Main Issue

3. The main issue of the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the local area, including the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a detached chalet bungalow set slightly back from the road and between two dwellings of a similar scale. There are currently two small dormers with pitched roofs on the west elevation and one on the rear elevation.
5. The local area is characterised predominantly by detached two-storey and chalet bungalow properties with varied roof forms. The road slopes down to the east, which means that the appeal site is set slightly lower than No. 6 Hilltop Road but higher than No. 8 Hilltop Road.
6. The appeal scheme is for the replacement of the two small dormers on the west elevation with one larger dormer, the addition of a large dormer on the east elevation and changes to the rear elevation including a first-floor gable extension in place of the existing small dormer, bi-fold doors and new internal layout.

7. The Council's Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Adopted 2020 (SPD) provides useful guidance on the design of householder extensions. It advises that generally an extension or alteration should complement and coordinate with the scale, form and massing of the original dwelling. It also advises that roof extensions and dormer windows that alter the existing ridge line of the roof or significantly alter the roof profile of a building will not normally be acceptable.
8. Whilst the proposed side dormers would be very slightly inset from the ridgeline of the host property, they would cover a significant proportion of the roof plane on each side and feature large flat roof sections. This would alter the roof profile and result in bulky additions that would be out of scale and unsympathetic to the host dwelling.
9. Although matching materials would be used and the scheme would not involve alterations to the front of the property, the side dormers would still be visible from the public realm. Even if such views would be minimised by the set back from the front elevation, this does not remove the need for good design.
10. The position of the dormer on the west elevation would be comparable to the position of one of the existing smaller dormers. However, the current dormers are of an acceptable scale and design whereas the proposed side dormers are not.
11. The appellant suggests that the addition of matching dormers on each side of the dwelling will help balance the front elevation and therefore enhance the street scene. However, if I were to take this view, the bulk, scale and design of the dormers persuades me that the proposal fails to avoid harm overall.
12. The appellant has provided examples of other properties in the local area which have greater height and massing than the appeal site or which have been increased in size through alterations and extensions. However, it is not the principle of extending the appeal site that is in contention, but rather the design of the proposed scheme, with specific reference to the side dormers. Therefore, the presence of varied architectural character, differing roof forms and examples of successful applications for other types of alteration work in the area do not alter my conclusion on this matter.
13. The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB). AONBs are landscape designations of national importance, which paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in these areas. The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 describes the specific qualities of the AONB as characterised by dispersed historic settlements, a dense network of historic routeways, an abundance of ancient woodland and small irregularly shaped fields.
14. The appeal property is located within a private road and is adjoined by residential dwellings to the south and west. There are open fields to the north and east. Having regard to the predominantly built-up nature of the immediate area, together with the location on the edge of the settlement, and limited scale of development, I consider that the appeal scheme would have a neutral effect on the landscape character of the wider AONB.

15. The council have no objection to some elements of the scheme including the rear first floor gable extension and other rear elevation changes, and I have no reason to disagree with their findings. However, this does not outweigh the harm identified above regarding the scheme as a whole.
16. Consequently, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the local area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 and the guidance provided in the SPD. This policy and guidance seek to ensure - amongst other matters - that new developments will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages.

Other Matters

17. The scheme would provide an additional bedroom and bathroom facilities which would result in a more functional family home for the appellant. However, this is a personal benefit which does not outweigh the harm identified above. There is also nothing to indicate that these aims could not also be achieved through an alternative design. I therefore afford this matter limited weight and for the avoidance of doubt, it does not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
18. The appeal scheme would not extend the property beyond the existing ground floor footprint, nor closer to neighbouring properties and there were no objections to the scheme received. It is not within West Hoathly Conservation Area and the residential use and the existing front access would be retained. However, these matters do not alter my conclusions on the main issue.
19. The evidence indicates that the scheme would not have an unacceptable impact on the living conditions of nearby occupiers, but this is a pre-requisite of such development and is therefore a neutral matter.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.

J Wellstead

INSPECTOR