



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 June 2023

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/D/22/3305223

Rockhouse Bank Farm , Sluice Lane, Normans Bay, East Sussex BN24 6QN

- 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 John Sargeant against the decision of Rother District Council.
 - The application Ref RR/2022/184/P, dated 6 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is proposed internal alterations, proposed oak frame porch to front elevation and single storey utility extension to rear elevation, proposed dormers to front and rear elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site, Rockhouse Bank Farm, includes the appeal property which is a modest two-storey detached house. It has a main narrow, long rectangular floorplan. A small, narrow, hipped roof porch with side front door sits in an otherwise uncluttered front elevation below a tall, steeply pitched gable ended main roof bookended by matching chimney stacks. A cat-slide roof falls to ground floor eaves level across most of the rear elevation which includes a porch and dormer window with hipped roofs. It sits at the front of the appeal site with a small garage to one side and low outbuildings in-line to the rear. It is an isolated position in the countryside on slightly higher ground along the north side of Sluice Lane.
4. This simple, largely uncluttered, well-proportioned and designed house is, therefore, locally distinctive. It also has a notable presence in the broadly featureless, panoramic flat open landscape of the Pevensy Marshes. Albeit a relatively modern house and not a heritage asset or in a conservation area it nevertheless draws the eye and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
5. Notwithstanding oak timber framing or matching materials and improved main access into the house, the wide front porch would have a shallow, low-pitched front gable and two narrow pane windows either side. These elements would be out of kilter with the more steeply pitched roofs and prevailing design of windows in the house. This structure would also no longer be aligned mainly

below a central first-floor window but be spread further across the elevation, tight towards the ground floor windows either side, unduly eroding space around and between them. The porch would, therefore, not be a subservient structure but appear squeezed in and give an overly cramped and disproportionate horizontal emphasis to this lower part of the house.

6. The wide side frames of the front dormer windows would give a stubby proportion to these structures and though align vertically would overlap either side the first-floor windows below. Though relatively small side cheeks, the tall, wide hipped roof above would extend up to the ridge line of the main roof. This would result in a substantial protrusion of built form beyond the plane of the roof slope at a high level and on one side be near each chimney stack. The dormers would, therefore, appear overly bulky and give a pronounced unbalanced, top-heavy emphasis to this part of the house. A first-floor rear dormer window is narrow and has a lower roof so is not comparable.
7. Individually and especially together, these parts of the proposal would significantly detract from important features in the most apparent part of the house and undermine the overall integrity of the front elevation. These would be prominent and conspicuous in public views for some distance in both directions along Sluice Lane and stark in this streetscene.
8. The first-floor rear dormer window would be increased in width and the narrow ground floor rear porch would be increased in height, width and depth. Neither extension would significantly change the stepped arrangement of built form in this part of the house or unduly detract from the cat-slide roof. Limited parts of each extension would be seen from Sluice Lane with no appreciation of the flat roofs. However, a lack of greater public visibility does not overcome innate incompatible design. The dormer window would have a squat, horizontal emphasis and the ground floor extension would contain a disproportionate area of blank brickwork in the rear elevation. Both flat roofs would be discordant features and out of keeping with the pitched roofs of the house.
9. I therefore find that the proposal would cause material harm to the character and appearance of the appeal property and to the surrounding area. As such, it does not comply with Policies OSS4(iii) and EN3(i) and (ii) of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy, September 2014 or with Policy DHG9(ii), (iii) and (vi)¹ of the Rother Development and Site Allocations Local Plan, December 2019. These policies include that extensions and alterations should respect and respond positively to the scale, form, detail and overall design of the dwelling and be visually subservient to the building, including its roof form. Development should also have regard to its context, respect and not detract from the character and appearance of the locality, street-scene or countryside and contribute positively to the site and surroundings.

Other Matters

10. The appeal site is in the Pevensey Levels Special Area of Conservation and Ramsar site. The Council considers that the extension and alteration of the house (to improve internal living accommodation with no increase in occupants) would not have a likely significant effect on these European Sites alone or in combination with other plans and projects. Since I intend to dismiss the appeal for the reasons set out in the main issue above there is no prospect

¹ Not Policy DHG9(iv) cited in the Council's decision notice because usable external amenity space is not relevant

of planning permission being granted. As the competent authority, I do not therefore need to consider this matter or appropriate assessment any further as to do so would not alter my decision or the outcome of this appeal.

11. The proposal is a revised scheme further to the Council's refusal of a previous planning application. I have, though, considered the proposal and determined this appeal on its individual planning merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

12. The proposal does not accord with the development plan. There are no other material considerations which outweigh these findings. Consequently, for the reasons given above the proposal is unacceptable and the appeal does not therefore succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR