



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 June 2023

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 June 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/Y9507/D/22/3312605

The Rubbing House, Town Lane, Singleton, West Sussex, PO18 0SP

- 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 Adrian Burrows against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/22/01511/HOUS, dated 22 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion to second floor with access stair from the first floor, dormer windows to north, south, west and east, flat roof terrace on the second floor.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Y9507/D/22/3312606

The Rubbing House, Town Lane, Singleton, West Sussex, PO18 0SP

- 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 Adrian Burrows against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNPA/22/01510/HOUS, dated 22 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion to second floor with access stair from the first floor, dormer window to north, conservation style Velux windows to the south, west and east, flat roof terrace on the second floor.
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Decision – Appeal A

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for loft conversion to second floor with access stair from the first floor, dormer windows to north, south, west and east, flat roof terrace on the second floor, at The Rubbing House, Town Lane, Singleton, West Sussex, PO18 0SP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref SDNP/22/01511/HOUS, dated 22 March 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall not begin later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: PL 100 Rev C, PL 101 Rev B, PL 103, PL 104 Rev A, and Arbtech Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment dated 30.11.21.
 - 3) No external lighting shall be installed on any part of the terrace hereby approved, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Decision – Appeal B

2. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for loft conversion to second floor with access stair from the first floor, dormer window to north, conservation style Velux windows to the south, west and east, flat roof terrace on the second floor, at The Rubbing House, Town Lane, Singleton, West Sussex, PO18 0SP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref SDNPA/22/01510/HOUS, dated 22 March 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall not begin later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: PL 100 Rev C, PL 101 Rev B, PL 103, PL 104, and Arbtech Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment dated 30.11.21.
 - 3) The roof lights hereby approved shall be fitted with automatic blackout blinds to avoid any upward light spill in accordance with sections 6.3 and 9 of the South Downs National Park Authority's Dark Skies Technical Advice Note (May 2021). Once installed the roof blinds shall be maintained in working order and retained as approved in perpetuity.
 - 4) No external lighting shall be installed on any part of the terrace hereby approved, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appeals relate to similar schemes at the same site. The appeal A scheme is for 4 dormer windows. The appeal B scheme is for roof lights as an alternative to the dormers. Both schemes also include the same proposal for a flat roof terrace on the second floor. I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning.

Main Issue

4. The main issue for both appeals is the effect of the proposals upon the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the Scheduled Monument known as The Trundle Hillfort and the grade II* West Dean Registered Park and Garden.

Reasons

5. The existing dwelling stands in a highly sensitive and iconic location and is part of a well enjoyed and accessible part of the South Downs National Park. The area has a tranquil and remote character. The Council refers to it as an historic landscape of great time depth, with reference to the nearby iron age hill fort to the east, various historic earthworks in the immediate area, ancient woodland, and the adjacent designed landscape of West Dean to the north.
6. The existing dwelling is highly prominent from the area to the south and southwest, which is readily accessed by the public across a network of local rights of way. From these perspectives the full height of its well composed south front and side elevations can be easily seen. These are arranged with a regularly spaced pattern of sash windows to its two floors, set under a low

pitched hipped roof with deep eaves. Together these present a building that is based accurately on a style typical of the late Georgian period.

7. The roof is currently only broken by a formal set of chimneys, one to each side. In terms of appeal A, the proposal would see these public facing roof slopes altered by the addition of two dormer windows to the front slope, and one to either side. The dormer windows would be modestly sized so that they would appear as a clear subservient addition to the principal floors below. They would be positioned to align with the façade arrangement below and thus respect the dwelling's strong symmetry. They would read as an appropriate addition that would not be discordant with the original design rationale, where modestly sized roof apertures such as this were common place to provide a basic level of daylight to ancillary accommodation.
8. The dormers would be set well up above the eaves and down from the ridge, each occupying less than half of the roof length. As a result, the cheeks of the dormers would be relatively modest and not overly assertive as the Council suggests. The application form refers to a lead finish, which would respect the traditional detailing of the dwelling, and have an appearance that would be similar to the slate roof.
9. Whilst such spaces would be more typically lit by dormers in a building of this style, a similarly modest arrangement of roof lights, as is proposed in appeal B, would also not appear out of place. It is suggested that openings at roof level would be more prominent than the existing openings below. However, at my visit it was clear that when viewed from the south and southwest almost the entire front façade of the building and a full view of its side elevations is possible from numerous positions. Hedges and other domestic planting fronting the dwelling are low level. Thus, neither the dormers nor the roof lights would be overly prominent.
10. Both proposals include a terrace that would be accessed from the attic level and would make use of the existing flat roof at the rear. The terrace would however be set back significantly from the edge of the existing flat roof and set in from the sides. From my observations on site, it would be difficult to see this alteration from any of the nearby footpaths to the south and southwest of the dwelling.
11. Beyond this to the north the existing vegetation and topography would also make views of the proposed terrace very difficult. Additionally, the rear of the dwelling is separated from the rear boundary of the site by a significant depth of garden and other buildings. For these reasons, even if it was glimpsed from land to the north, it would not be prominent to view and would be seen in the context of a developed and inward facing domestic curtilage.
12. Mature and dense woodland exists to the north, east and west of the dwelling. This already serves to mitigate the dwelling's impact on the wider landscape, including the designed landscape of West Dean; and entirely screens it from the attractive and broad views from the higher land of The Trundle to the east. It is possible to glimpse the dwelling from a small number of positions on the right of way that heads south. From these perspectives the roof is primarily visible. However, owing to the modest scale of the proposals, these views would be little altered.

13. Both proposals would introduce additional openings into the outward facing roof slopes. Taking into account the large scale of the existing openings to the floors below, the additional light spill from the proposed dormers would be very modest and would have no meaningful impact on the valued dark skies of the area.
14. Light spill is however more problematic from roof lights. This impact can be managed adequately by a condition to secure the fitting of automatic blackout blinds.
15. External lighting could be reasonably expected in association with the roof terrace. Light fittings could increase a spill of light from the dwelling and have an adverse impact on the area's dark skies. New external light fittings can be restricted by an appropriately worded condition.
16. In summary, the proposals would not harm the character or appearance of the area. They would accord with Policies SD1, SD4, SD5, SD6, SD7, SD8, SD10, SD20 and SD31 of the South Downs Local Plan 2014-33 (LP). Together these Policies seek to ensure that development proposals conserve landscape character, utilise appropriate architectural design, preserve the visual integrity, scenic quality and tranquillity of the National Park, conserve dark night skies, and conserve the amenity value and tranquillity of non-motorised travel routes.
17. The proposals would also accord with the purposes of the South Downs National Park designation and would not conflict with Paragraph 176 or 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which places great weight on conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, and the conservation of heritage assets.

Other Matters

18. The proposals would see the existing room in the roof altered so that it serves as a bedroom and bathroom. Considering the overall scale of the dwelling, and that the existing attic room could be easily used as a bedroom, I am satisfied that the proposal would not significantly intensify the use of the dwelling. Thus, matters such as additional traffic movements or increased activity at the site as a result of either proposal do not need to be considered further.
19. It is suggested that the plans do not accurately show how the roof terrace would cut into the building. However, whilst additional section drawings may have been helpful, the roof cut out would sit behind and broadly align with the height of the proposed balustrade, and it would therefore not be necessary to represent it on the plans that show the proposed north elevation.
20. The Council's refusals refer to conflict with Policy SD9 of the LP, which states that development proposals should contribute to the restoration and enhancement of existing habitats. The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment refers to the low potential for impacts to bat roosts and advises that the proposals would not affect any of the features which could be used by roosting bats. It suggests the implementation of a precautionary working method and a restriction on external lighting. This proposed mitigation was considered acceptable by the Council's Environment Officer. Given the limited scale of both proposals I can see no reason to take a contrary view and am satisfied that such impacts

should not form a main issue of the appeals. Both proposals would accord with Policies SD9 and SD10 of the LP.

Conditions

21. I have had regard to the conditions suggested by the Council. I have considered these against the tests in the Framework and the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance. I have imposed conditions specifying the approved plans as this provides certainty. I have also imposed conditions to secure blinds for the roof lights and control external lighting related to the terrace, following my reasoning above. Regarding the external lighting conditions, I have amended the wording suggested by the Council so that it is restricted to the proposed terrace, as controlling the addition of external lighting across the whole site would not be relevant to the development permitted.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons above, both appeals should be allowed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR