



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 May 2023

by J Wellstead BA(Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/D/22/3307530

Bridle End, 1 Forge Close, Staplecross TN32 5QF

- 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 and Mrs C Stevens against the decision of Rother District Council.
 - The application Ref RR/2022/746/P, dated 23 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is extensions and alterations, loft improvements with new dormers, and addition of entrance porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There is a small inconsistency in the address of the appeal site in the submitted documents. For the interests of clarity, I have taken the address from the application form.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is set on a large corner plot which fronts on to Forge Lane with its western side flanked by Forge Close. Forge Close is a cul-de-sac made up of very similar detached chalet bungalows which have predominantly retained their original feature and materials. Forge Lane and the wider area predominantly features two-storey dwellings of different styles and designs, including a pair of Grade II listed cottages to the east of the appeal site and a listed building opposite the site.
5. While the appeal site sits on Forge Lane, its detached chalet bungalow design and style closely matches those on Forge Close. There is a projection to the west side, a large rear dormer, and a single storey garage to the east side. However, the compact form and proportions of the chalet bungalow give rise to its character.

6. The appeal scheme follows a previous refusal¹ and appeal². It would add a single storey side extension and dormer to the west, a one and a half storey extension to the east with a front dormer, a larger rear dormer in place of the current one and a new front porch.
7. The areas of contention are the extension on the east side and the cumulative variation of roof form across the property as a whole. The Council have not raised any objections to the other elements of the scheme, and I have no reason to disagree.
8. The new plans feature a one and a half storey rather than two storey side extension to the east. The roof of this aspect of the appeal scheme is of the same height as the ridgeline of the host property and extends across a substantial width at this height. The side extension would therefore not be subservient. The appellant suggests that setting down the roofline would be incongruous, awkward and introduce a variation in ridge height which the Council would object to. However, this conflicts with Policy DHG9 of the Council's Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (DSALP) which requires that side extensions are visually subservient to the original dwelling including its roof form.
9. The appellant instead suggests that the eastern part of the scheme would be viewed as part of the principal elevation with the western extension perceived as a subservient addition and that this accords with the design approach and character of the properties in Forge Close, which have a gable front projection and side gabled aspects. However, the appeal scheme would not resemble these properties as it combines additional elements and would have a much more complex and therefore incongruous form.
10. I accept that the appellant has sought to reduce the ambitions of the scheme and use features such as matching windows and doors to create a uniformity in the facade. Despite these features, the scale, bulk and design of the scheme would result in an overly dominant form of development, especially in the context of the chalet bungalows next to the appeal site.
11. Also, the full height extension to one side of the front gable feature with a set down extension on the other side would look odd and unbalanced. The appellant has highlighted the property opposite, which has a principal two storey element and a lower side addition. However, this is a very different house type which does not have the character, context or site constraints of the appeal site and so is not comparable.
12. The appeal site has a relatively shallow frontage which means the scheme would have some prominence in the street scene. Although the dwelling would retain a sense of being a chalet bungalow in some views of the property, its prominent corner plot position means any such perception would not be sustained in other views. That some aspects of the scheme would be screened by the hedges and vegetation bordering the plot does not remove the need for good design. In addition, there is no guarantee that any such screening would be retained in the future.
13. Overall, the scale and design of the appeal scheme would result in the loss of the compact character of the original dwelling as a chalet bungalow and fail to

¹ RR/2021/2161/P

² APP/U1430/D/21/3283575

be a subservient addition. This would result in an overly dominant form of development which would diminish the character, appearance and integrity of the host building, with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The spacious plot, retention of garden space, limited increase in footprint and gaps between the scheme and plot boundaries do not alter my conclusions on this issue.

14. 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 Policies OSS4 and EN3 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, Policies DEN1 and DHG9 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan 2019 and the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework). These policies seek to ensure, amongst other matters, that new development is of a high-quality design which does not detract from the character or appearance of the host dwelling or local area.

Other Matters

15. I have had regard to the statutory duty imposed by section S66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of The Framework, which require me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings. There are two nearby listed buildings; Forge Cottage and Forge House opposite the site, and Manor Cottage and Streatfield Cottage to the east of the site. The Staplecross War Memorial and Kent cottage are also listed but are further from the site.
16. Forge House is a Grade II listed dwelling that dates from the seventeenth century, with the later addition of Forge Cottage from the eighteenth century.
17. Manor Cottage and Streatfield Cottage is a pair of dwellings that is Grade II listed and date from the eighteenth century or earlier.
18. The significance of the listed buildings is derived, insofar as they relate to this appeal, to be primarily associated with their contribution to the historic/aesthetic values of the area. The surrounding residential properties inform their setting and contribute positively to their significance.
19. Although the cottages can be seen from in and around the appeal site, and the appeal site can be seen in views of the listed buildings, these views are against a backdrop of mixed built form and seen in the context of the mix of old and modern dwelling styles in the area. I therefore do not consider that the scheme would materially alter their setting nor alter their significance as heritage assets. These conclusions reflect those of the Council. Kent Cottage and the War Memorial are beyond these listed buildings and so their setting would not be affected by the proposal.
20. I accept that the scheme would provide additional living space which would result in a more modern and functional home which meets the needs of the appellant and their family. However, this personal benefit does not outweigh the harm identified above. There is also nothing to indicate that this aim could not also be achieved through an alternative design. I therefore afford this matter limited weight.
21. The Parish Council support the scheme and there were no local objections. However, these matters do not alter my conclusions on the main issue.

22. The appellant contends that the Council did not engage with them in order to overcome any concerns, and that long delays in the process have been frustrating. While I am not unsympathetic, this is not a matter material to my assessment of the proposal for an appeal made under Section 78 of the Act.
23. The appellant has quoted a ministerial statement highlighting a need to make it easier for families to undertake home improvements. However, this does not outweigh the need to ensure new development is high quality and appropriate.

Conclusion

24. 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