



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 January 2024

by Michael Evans BA MA MPhil DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H2265/D/23/3331466

19 Hartfield Close, Tonbridge TN10 4JP

- 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 L Hutchinson, Building Design Studio against the decision of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.
 - The application Ref TM/23/01045/FL, dated 16 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 3 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "Addition of first floor, two storey extensions to front and rear elevations with dormer windows to front and rear roof slopes and skylight windows in front, rear and side roof slopes".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect on the streetscene and the character and appearance of the host dwelling.

Reasons

3. The appeal concerns a detached bungalow within a cul de sac characterised by detached and semi-detached bungalows. It sits towards the western end of the road, on the southern side. The adjacent dwelling to the west is no. 64 Higham Lane. This is a chalet style dwelling that fronts onto Higham Lane and relates more closely to the noticeably more varied character of this street than Hartfield Close.
4. There is also a significant gap between it and the dwelling at the appeal site, which faces onto Hartfield Close fairly near the bungalow to the east at no. 18. Therefore, the context within which the host dwelling would be most readily appreciated and against which the effect of the proposal should be assessed is that of other properties fronting onto Hartfield Close.
5. The property at the appeal site shows some differences from others in the cul de sac. These include both the bungalow itself and the plot being relatively wide, with gable ends to the sides and none to the front. Despite this it also reflects the fairly strong single storey nature of dwellings and the general absence of upper floor windows at the front, which are distinctive characteristics. However, the upwards enlargement of the dwelling would

- result in the introduction of a first floor. At the front there would be a window in a central gable and dormer additions to either side of this in the raised roof.
6. This pattern of fenestration, as well as the dormer additions, would be particularly unusual features in the street. Dormers at other properties can be seen from the street in Hartfield Close but these are clearly located in other roads and do not have a comparable effect on the streetscene to that which would arise in this instance. The enlarged property would be a chalet style dwelling in a street dominated by bungalows. In consequence, it would provide an abrupt and jarring contrast with the character of existing development.
 7. Despite being at a lower ground level than other properties, it is in a prominent position towards the entrance to the Close. The presence of two visible floors, including the dormer projections, would make it a particularly eye-catching feature of the street, unduly accentuating this prominence. The properties on the other side of the street to the north are at an appreciably higher ground level but do not have upper floors at the front, so that they provide no significant support for the appeal.
 8. Because of the changes in ground levels, the height of dwellings in the street shows some variation. Nevertheless, even if the height of the extended dwelling, in itself, was acceptable, due to the above factors it would be a discordant, unsympathetic and incongruous feature in the street.
 9. I recognise that there are some aspects of the scheme that attempt to reflect existing features in the street, such as the materials and front gable. However, these would not significantly mitigate the adverse impact. Changes have been made to the scheme that was considered at the previous appeal, including lowering the ridge height and only having one front projection. However, this does not, in itself, confer acceptability and this appeal must be considered on its own merits.
 10. The host dwelling is in a location where the principle of an extension would be acceptable and is of no particular architectural merit. However, despite these matters it is concluded that rather than representing an enhancement, the development would harm the streetscene and the character and appearance of the host dwelling. There would be conflict with Core Strategy 2007, Policy CP24 which, among other things, intends that development should be of a high quality and respect the site and surroundings.
 11. In the National Planning Policy Framework it is indicated that decisions should ensure that developments satisfy a number of considerations. These include that the proposed development should add to the overall quality of the area, as well as being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character, which would not be achieved in this case.
 12. I share the view of the Council that there would be no unacceptable impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of dwellings to the rear of the site in Pen Way. This is because of the distances involved and use of obscured glazing which could be secured by condition and would be sufficient with restrictions on opening to protect privacy. Nevertheless, the lack of harm in respect of this matter is a neutral factor that weighs neither for nor against the proposal.

13. Because of the harm to the streetscene and the character and appearance of the host dwelling, taking account of all other matters raised, it is determined that the appeal fails.

M Evans

INSPECTOR