
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 April 2025

by **C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/D/24/3356160

Tanzematt, Oak Farm Lane, Fairseat, Kent TN15 7JU

- 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 Gary Jackson against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application ref. is 24/02339/HOUSE.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of a rear and RH side with first floor extension over existing/Rh single storey footprint and loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the local area; and
 - ancient woodland in the vicinity of the appeal site.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Tanzematt is a detached, chalet bungalow on Oak Farm Lane, a rural thoroughfare set in wider countryside of fields and woodland. Walking along the highway, it is apparent that dwellings on the west side are predominantly bungalows or chalet properties of differing design, detailing and external materials. Where they exist, dormer windows are modest in scale and set within their roof slopes.
4. Conversely, the proposed front dormer to the northwestern side of the ridge would be of substantially greater mass than those in the surrounds. It would occupy a significant proportion of the flank roof slope of the dwelling, dominating the upper level of the host unit and competing with its relatively diminutive scale. When taken together with the other front dormer, both of which would be constructed in close proximity to the ridge line, this would increase their prominence, and appear boxy and bulky. The elements would be clearly visible from the front gardens of surrounding houses and the public domain, having a jarring effect by virtue of their extent across the roof of the building.
5. I appreciate that the development would improve the functionality of the internal accommodation and have noted the diverse nature of other dwellings in the neighbourhood. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have identified above. In any event, additions to other dwellings would be neutral considerations in any balance against planning harm, and I am mindful that each case must be assessed on its own merits.

6. I therefore conclude that the scheme would result in detriment to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and local area. It would fail Policy SP1 of the Sevenoaks Local Development Plan Core Strategy February 2011 (CS), and Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan February 2015 (DMP), which require new development to be designed to a high quality and respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated.

Ancient Woodland

7. Part of the front of the site is located within the buffer zone of an area of ancient woodland. Whilst I note that the development itself does not involve vegetation removal or soil disturbance, and it is located some distance away from the trees, I share the Council's apprehensions that other activities such as deliveries from heavy goods vehicles, material storage and disposal may have adverse impacts.
8. Given these concerns, I consider that such matters cannot be properly left to condition, as compliance would be unclear. A precautionary approach, in my view, is reasonable and appropriate where ancient woodland is at issue, and any effects should be recognised prior to determination.
9. In the absence of any robust information, I am drawn to conclude that the scheme would be injurious to ancient woodland within the vicinity of the appeal site. Accordingly, it would not comply with Policy SP11 of the CS and Policy EN1 of the DMP, which seek to conserve biodiversity.

Conclusion

10. Having regard to the above and all associated factors, I dismiss the appeal.

C Hall

INSPECTOR