
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 December 2013

by Peter Rose BA MRTPI DMS MCM1

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 23 December 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/X2220/D/13/2207291
8 Heights Terrace, Dover, Kent CT17 9DU

- 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 Mrs Janet Stromsoy against the decision of Dover District Council.
 - The application Ref DOV/13/00560, dated 8 July 2013, was refused by notice dated 17 September 2013.
 - The development proposed is side extension to existing semi detached house comprising two rooms/entrance hall/ground floor toilet with hand basin and shower. All to be constructed in a traditional manner using double block walls, rendered externally and painted to match existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the host building, upon the Dover Western Heights Conservation Area, and upon the setting of the Western Heights Scheduled Monument.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a two-storey semi-detached dwelling located within the Dover Western Heights Conservation Area (the Conservation Area). Open fields lie to the north and east of the appeal site and these form part of both the Conservation Area and of the Western Heights Scheduled Monument (the Scheduled Monument). The Council advises that the Scheduled Monument relates to local historic fortifications dating back to the Napoleonic wars.
4. I have not been provided with full details of the respective backgrounds to the Conservation Area and Scheduled Monument. Nevertheless, the Council suggests that the character of the Conservation Area significantly relates to the setting of the Scheduled Monument and I have no reason to disagree. I also saw at my visit that the host property and surrounding dwellings are significant features within the local setting. The appeal site comprises one of a number of residential properties which occupy relatively isolated but prominent locations on high land adjacent to the Scheduled Monument. The appeal site has a particularly exposed location at the end of a row of dwellings within Heights

Terrace overlooking the fields, and the surrounding character is particularly defined by this open setting.

5. Whilst the extension would be of matching materials and would seek to blend with the existing appearance of the host building, these detailed features of the scheme would not offset the overriding scale and position of the development. In particular, the extension would be some 6.3 metres wide at the rear, would project some 3.3 metres beyond the existing flank wall, and would have a depth of some 10.6 metres along its exposed side flank adjacent to the Scheduled Monument.
6. The host dwelling is a well proportioned building with a scale and form sympathetic to its neighbouring properties. It appears as a very neat and ordered part of the street-scene and of the wider setting. The scale and position of the extension would represent a substantial addition to the host building such that it would significantly change the character and appearance of the dwelling. The extension would not appear as a subservient feature sympathetic to the host building but as an unduly large and incongruous addition to both the dwelling and to the surrounding area. This impact would be exacerbated by the highly exposed setting of the site. I have noted the appellant's suggestion that no public access is available to the surrounding area but, nevertheless, the open character of the land would still make for a highly exposed setting to the development.
7. I find, therefore, that the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and would similarly harm the setting of the Scheduled Monument. Even so, I consider that the appeal building and the scale of development are sufficiently modest such that the harm to the significance of the Conservation Area would be less than substantial. Thus, it is necessary to consider, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), whether there would be public benefits to the scheme sufficient to outweigh the harm. I have noted the appellant's submission that additional private living space and facilities are required within the host building, and the particular need for a ground floor toilet to serve elderly residents. Even so, I have found no public benefits sufficient to outweigh the harm likely to be caused.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host building, would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Dover Western Heights Conservation Area, and would detract from the setting of the Western Heights Scheduled Monument. Accordingly, the development would be contrary to the aims of the Framework which recognises that designated heritage assets such as Conservation Areas and Scheduled Monuments are irreplaceable resources, and requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The Framework also places great importance upon high quality design.

Other Matters

9. Regard has been given to all other matters raised, including the appellant's reference to a number of other extensions and developments in the vicinity. The full planning histories of each of those schemes have not been provided but, in any case, those developments do not justify the specific harm to character and appearance that would result if this appeal were to succeed.

10. The appellant also states that English Heritage had no objection to the proposal. Whilst no objection was raised, I note that its letter of 5 August 2013 advises that English Heritage did not wish to comment. The letter instead recommends that the application be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and with reference to the local planning authority's own specialist conservation advice.
11. None of the above matters affect my conclusion on the main issue.

Conclusion

12. For the above reasons, and with regard to all other matters raised, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Peter Rose

INSPECTOR

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