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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 April 2016

by **David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI**

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

Decision date: 5 May 2016

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**Appeal Ref: APP/V2255/D/15/3140640**

**1 Manor Cottages, Crockham Lane, Hernhill, Kent ME13 9JY**

- 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 & Mrs Layton against the decision of Swale Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 15/507498/FULL, dated 9 September 2015, was refused by notice dated 5 November 2015.
  - The development proposed is two storey extension to existing residential dwelling.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matter

2. During the course of the application the proposal was amended with the substitution of a revised roof form for the extension. I have dealt with the appeal on the basis of these amended plans.

### Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building concerned and the group of houses of which it forms part, including any effect on the Hernhill Conservation Area.

### Reasons

4. Manor Cottages are a row of ten uniform and unspoilt mid 20th century council houses in a backland position facing in the direction of Crockham Lane. Whilst screened from the main part of the village they form a single coherent group with a pair of semi-detached houses at each end, set slightly forward, with two terraces of three houses each between. All ten houses face towards a large open grass area to the front which provides an important setting for the group as a whole.
5. No 1 is a semi-detached property at the far end of the group, furthest from the communal access path. Unlike the others, and because of this end position, its front garden is divided from the open grass area by a low fence and hedge and is put to more active leisure use than the others. However, the front elevation of the house and the other half of the pair, No 2, are clearly visible as an integral part of the overall group of ten houses.

## Appeal Decision APP/V2255/D/15/3140640

6. The proposal is to extend No 1 with a two storey extension at the front corner of the house, extending both to the front and to the side, wrapping round the corner. The extension would project about 2.9 m from the front elevation of the house, starting about 3.5 m from the common boundary with No 2, and about 1.9 m from the side elevation of the house towards the side boundary of the property. The extension would provide a large entrance hall on the ground floor and a larger, dual aspect fourth bedroom and bathroom on the first floor.
7. The extension would be built in matching materials, with some similar windows and a pitched roof to reflect that of the host building. It would be smaller and with a lower ridgeline than the existing house. However, by extending both to the front and side the attractive symmetry of the pair of semi-detached houses would be completely lost, and on a larger scale the attractive symmetry of the whole group of ten houses would be lost too.
8. Contrary to the appellant's view, the proposed front projection would be an intrusive rather than welcoming feature when seen from the open grass area in front of the houses. This works effectively as a communal open space allowing an unspoilt and unbroken view of the façade of the ten houses. There are no other front extensions to these properties, which form a simple but unified whole, and the fact that No 1 is at the far end does not reduce its important visual contribution to the overall group. The front doors of all the houses face south, equally welcoming whether at the beginning or the end of the row.
9. The bulk, mass and awkward roof form of the extension would amount to an over dominant and discordant addition to the property. It would conflict visually with the simple rectangular shapes and hipped roof forms of the other properties in the row, resulting in an incongruous feature damaging to the character and appearance of the host building, the pair of semi-detached houses involved and the terrace as whole.
10. No 1 is well screened by tall hedgerows and fencing from Walnut Tree House and the grounds of the Red Lion Public House to the west and south. This boundary also corresponds with the boundary of the designated village Conservation Area (which excludes Manor Cottages). Whilst the impact of the proposal on the village and the Conservation Area as a whole would not be significant, and its overall character and appearance would be preserved, there would nevertheless be a more local impact on the character and appearance of the building and Manor Cottages which warrants refusal in this case.
11. For these reasons the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the building concerned and Manor Cottages as a whole. This would conflict with Policies E1, E19 and E24 of the Swale Borough Local Plan 2008 which require development to be of a scale, design and appearance appropriate to the location, to relate to its context in respect of scale, height and massing, and for extensions to be of high quality design.
12. The appellant argues that the south elevation of the house is not the 'principal elevation' in this case and that there are permitted development rights to extend in that direction. However, with the front door on this elevation it is clearly the main, entrance elevation even though unusually it does not front onto a highway.

Appeal Decision APP/V2255/D/15/3140640

**Conclusion**

13. The benefits of additional living accommodation, the opportunity to upgrade the property to lifetime homes standard and to improve energy efficiency are fully appreciated. The proposed extension would not impact upon the living conditions of nearby occupiers, would not create a terracing effect and, given its location, would not affect the character and appearance of the village as a whole. However, the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the host building and Manor Cottages as a group, and in these circumstances the appeal should be dismissed.

*David Reed*

INSPECTOR