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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 August 2019

**by Patrick Hanna MSc MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/19/3231478**

**88 Main Street, Seahouses, Northumberland NE68 7TP**

- 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 Michael Oxley against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
  - The application Ref 19/00926/FUL, dated 15 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 May 2019.
  - The development proposed is extension to an existing bed and breakfast establishment.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural Matters

2. I consider the description of development given by the Council on its decision letter to be more precise than that shown on the planning application form and appeal form and I have therefore used it in my decision.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
  - (a) the character and appearance of the host property and area, with particular regard to the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the setting of the Seahouses Conservation Area; and
  - (b) the living conditions of neighbouring residents.

### Reasons

#### *Character and appearance*

4. The appeal site is a two-storey, semi-detached property, operating as a bed-and-breakfast premises, which has previously had small extensions added to the side and rear, and with detached garage to the side. The bed-and-breakfast premises and adjoining dwelling are symmetrical in form with, unusually in the locality, gable dormers which provide strong definition of the eaves and roof. The site is located on a main approach into the town and is predominantly residential but with occasional commercial premises interspersed.
5. The appeal proposal would provide a full width extension including a cropped dormer to the principal elevation. I do not find the overall size of the proposal

unacceptable in its context, given the terracing of nearby buildings to which it would relate. However, the elevational treatment pays insufficient regard to the architectural cues of the host property, with one over-wide dormer and one windowless dormer. Furthermore, the balcony is an unconventional and poorly designed feature in this otherwise traditional frontage. Together, these features would contrast markedly with the original property, unbalance the symmetry of the building as a whole, and appear discordant in the wider street scene.

6. I attach great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Whilst the streetscape along this section of Main Street does not make significant contribution to this overall designation, the development should as a minimum maintain the existing contribution, given the appeal site's close relationship with a key approach road and with the town centre. The harm I have found to the street scene is consequently harmful to this designation.
7. No evidence is provided on the extent or character appraisal of the Seahouses Conservation Area. However, I note the main parties' comments that the appeal site is adjacent to it, and I observed the relationship of the site to the nearby characterful traditional stone terraces forming the outskirts of the town centre. For the same reasoning as above, the approach to the town, and thereby the setting of the Conservation Area, would be harmed. Whilst harm to the significance of the Conservation Area would be less than substantial, the considerable benefits from additional tourist accommodation are outweighed by the great weight I attach to preserving the setting of the conservation area.
8. For these reasons, therefore, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and area, with particular regard to the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the setting of the Seahouses Conservation Area. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with saved Policies CE6, F1 and F2 of the Berwick Upon Tweed Borough Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### *Living conditions*

9. The Council do not explain who is impacted in terms of privacy, but objection is made in these terms from No 86 Main Street. The proposed balconies are all confined within the side walls of the proposed extension, such that views would be to the rear only. Whilst the two-storey rear extension would be tight to the boundary of No 86, my observations on site indicated that the outlook from the rear of No 86 would not be dominated by the extension, given its limited depth beyond the rear elevation of No 86. Loss of light would not adversely affect living conditions, as a hallway is not habitable accommodation. As such, the proposal would not harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents. The proposal would accord with the requirements of paragraphs 127 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires that developments have a high standard of amenity.

#### *Other matters*

10. The proposal would provide improved tourist offer and associated economic and employment benefits, to which I give considerable weight, as I do to the paragraphs of the Framework which are generally supportive of such proposals. However, these are outweighed by the harm I have found to be caused above. Despite the age of the Berwick Upon Tweed Borough Local Plan, the relevant

policies have a considerable degree of consistency with the Framework. I give limited weight to the quoted precedent which I have only limited information about. Instead, I must assess the application on its merits. The proximity of other bed-and-breakfast facilities in the locality, the appellant's long-standing connections with the area, the former use of the buildings, and the design of any previous application, are all of neutral effect to my findings. Finally, the handling of delegation by the Council is not within my jurisdiction.

### **Conclusion**

11. I have found that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host property and area, the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the setting of the Seahouses Conservation Area. This is not outweighed by the lack of harm to living conditions of neighbouring residents. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Patrick Hanna*

INSPECTOR