



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 11 December 2020

by L McKay MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd December 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/B9506/D/20/3259776

Field Cottage, Bohemia, Redlynch SP5 2PT

- 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 A Campbell against the decision of New Forest National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 20/00281, dated 16 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is tiled roof conservatory to side elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the housing stock and character of the New Forest National Park.

Reasons

3. Policy DP36 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036 (LP) seeks to limit the size of extensions to dwellings that are not small dwellings, and which lie outside defined villages within the National Park (NP). The maximum size of an extension is limited to 30% of the floorspace of the existing dwelling, defined as the dwelling as it existed on 1 July 1982, or as it was originally built if after that date.
4. The statutory purposes of National Parks include conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. The supporting text to Policy DP36 identifies that incremental extensions in a nationally designated landscape can affect the locally distinctive character of the built environment of the New Forest, and over time can cause an imbalance in the range and mix of housing stock available. The LP also identifies that small-scale household development can result in a creeping suburbanisation of the NP, slowly eroding its distinctive character. The limits to extensions in Policy DP36 therefore seek to strike a balance between meeting changes in householder requirements and maintaining a stock of smaller sized dwellings, while minimising the impact of buildings in the National Park. Limiting the size of residential extensions is therefore important.
5. The LP sets out that floorspace is measured as the total internal habitable floorspace of the dwelling. For the purposes of measuring the floorspace of 'existing dwellings' this does not include conservatories, attached and detached outbuildings, however they are included when calculating the floorspace of

proposed extensions. I have also been referred to the Authority's Planning information leaflet on Extensions to dwellings, which provides more explanation of how enlargements should be calculated. It predates the adoption of the LP, however Policy DP11 of the previous Core Strategy had very similar requirements and definitions to Policy DP36 and therefore the leaflet is still of use in applying the current policy.

6. Field Cottage comprises a bungalow with an attached garage to one side. Part of the original roof void has been converted into living accommodation following planning permission in 1989, with dormers front and rear. A replacement garage with a room above was permitted in 1992, which also has a dormer to the front. There are no details before me of the appearance or floorplan of the dwelling as it existed in 1982, but the Authority suggests that its floorspace at that time was 84 square metres (sqm). The appellant however disputes whether the garage and roof spaces should have been included in that floorspace calculation. Although those developments took place before the appeal site was part of the NP, there is nothing in the Policy or the leaflet to suggest that enlargements carried out after 1982 but before formation of the NP should be discounted from the floorspace calculation.
7. The leaflet gives garages as an example of outbuildings that would be discounted from the measurement of existing dwellings but identifies that some attached outbuildings may be part of the main house and therefore discretion is appropriate depending on the individual characteristics of the site. It also states that accommodation within the roof space should be included where there is natural light, a permanent staircase and headroom of at least 1.5 metres.
8. In the absence of any plans of the layout of the dwelling and garage in 1982, it has not been demonstrated that the appearance, construction or layout of the original garage were such that it would have been considered as part of the main house. Consequently, I do not consider that the floorspace of the original garage should be included in the floorspace calculation of the 'existing dwelling'.
9. When considering whether accommodation in the roof space should be included, the leaflet does not make any distinction between when any such accommodation may have been created. Nonetheless, in the absence of details of the dwelling in 1982, I cannot be certain that the roofs over the main bungalow and original garage were the same size, form and shape as they are now, and have not been enlarged as part of the developments permitted since that date. The fact that the works to the roof were described in the planning permission as 'addition of a first floor' suggests to me that there may not have been any accommodation in the main roof at that time. There is also nothing before me to demonstrate that in 1982 the roofs had natural light, a staircase or adequate headroom. The proposal therefore differs from the appeal scheme at Melita¹ to which the appellant has referred me, where the Inspector was satisfied that the works to the loft did not enlarge the envelope of the original building.
10. Therefore, I cannot be certain that, on the relevant date, there was as much floorspace in the roof spaces as there is now, or that it would have been considered as internal habitable floorspace for the purposes of Policy DP36. As such, I cannot reasonably include the accommodation in the roof of the

¹ APP/B9506/D/18/3208354

bungalow and garage as part of the floorspace of the 'existing dwelling', and there are strong reasons to count it as additional floorspace since 1982.

11. The main parties dispute the percentage by which the roof accommodation has increased the floorspace, and the Authority acknowledges that some parts of the roof may have less than 1.5m headroom, which should be discounted from the habitable floorspace figures. Nevertheless, even using the appellant's lower figure, the floorspace of the dwelling has already increased by substantially more than 30% since 1982. The proposed conservatory would increase the floorspace even further. As such, it would conflict with LP Policy DP36.
12. I am mindful that the proposal would be unlikely to shift the dwelling beyond its current price bracket within the housing market, however it is the mix and range of housing stock, not house prices, that Policy DP36 seeks to protect. The proposal would not adversely affect the appearance of the dwelling, appear cramped within the plot, or harm the living conditions of neighbours. It would however result in further extension of a formerly modest dwelling, contributing to the gradual enlargement of dwellings in the NP. As a result, it would diminish the variety of dwelling sizes which forms an important part of the distinctive character of the NP, and would reduce the range and mix of housing stock available. Accordingly, it is the type of incremental development which Policy DP36 seeks to avoid, and would conflict with the core aims of that Policy.
13. The appellant has referred me to several other examples of development approved nearby, however I have limited details of those schemes and do not know the circumstances under which they came to be approved. Several relate to extensions, but in those cases I do not have the floorspace of both the 'existing dwelling' and the approved extensions, so cannot be certain whether they complied with Policy DP36 or its forerunner DP11, or whether they were allowed for other reasons. The bungalow replaced by a two-storey house would have been a replacement dwelling, and therefore would not have been considered under Policy DP36, which relates only to extensions. As such, it has not been demonstrated that any of these examples are directly comparable to the scheme before me. Therefore, the grant of planning permission for these other developments does not justify the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

L McKay

INSPECTOR