



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 March 2022 by Emma Grierson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by H Porter BA(Hons) MScDip IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/D/21/3282520

Walkhurst Farmhouse, New Pond Road, Benenden, Cranbrook TN17 4EN

- 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 and Mrs Cyster against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01035/FULL, dated 23 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey extension and a detached car port.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the surrounding area and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. Walkhurst Farmhouse (the host dwelling) is a two-storey detached dwelling, which occupies a large and spacious plot set back from a private route that extends off New Pond Road. Located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the site's surroundings are rural in nature, characterised by sporadic development interspersed by expanses of green fields and woodland. The generous garden, mature hedgerow boundaries and overall building-to-plot ratio cause the appeal site to sit comfortably within its rural AONB surroundings.
5. The proposed development would introduce a substantial two-storey extension to the side of the host dwelling, which would provide a large living area, bedroom and wet room on the ground floor and three bedrooms, two en-suite, on the first. A detached five-bay car port would be constructed just behind the site's front boundary and accessed via an additional opening off the private road.
6. Although it would respect the materials and offer symmetry to the existing dwelling, the proposed extension would be significant in size and occupy a

substantial footprint. Virtually doubling the size of the extant dwelling, the proposal would be neither modest nor subservient in relation to it.

7. The proposed car port has been designed to accommodate modern vehicles and would be of traditional oak framed design. Nevertheless, it would be a large and bulky structure that would add significantly to the developed area of the appeal site. Furthermore, its proposed location, forward of the current building line and directly adjacent to the road, would cause the car port to be prominent and highly visible.
8. Existing boundary hedging on the appeal site would provide some degree screening. However, both the proposed extension and the car port would still be visible above this and through the proposed access, the adjacent road, and neighbouring farmland. The cumulative impact of the proposed development would be to significantly increase the amount of built form on the plot thereby reducing the open garden area around the host dwelling. Therefore, the proposal would represent an incongruous addition to the appeal site, weakening the rural nature of its surroundings, to the detriment of the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
9. It is noted that the appellant would accept a condition relating to additional screening of the garage or its relocation. However, supplementary planting or screening would not mitigate the harmful impact that the overall size of the development proposed would have on the site and its surroundings. If the appellant considers an alternative location for the proposed car port would overcome the Council's concerns, they should submit a fresh application.
10. For the above reasons, I find that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the surrounding area and the AONB. It would therefore conflict with Policies CP4 and CP14 of the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy (2010) and Policies EN1, EN25 and H11 of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (2006). These policies collectively seek to ensure new development conserves and enhances Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, maintains the landscape character and quality of the countryside and locality, and respects the context of the site, with extensions to dwellings modest and in scale with the original dwelling.

Other Matters

11. I am aware of my duty as a decision maker under the Public Sector Equality Duty and I note the personal circumstances cited by the appellant in support for their proposal. However, the particular needs and circumstances of the appellant could change whereas the harm I have identified would be permanent. Furthermore, I have seen no evidence to warrant the overall size of the development in relation to the accommodation required to meet those needs. Therefore, whilst I am sympathetic to the appellant's circumstances, I do not find they justify nor outweigh the harm I have found.
12. A lack of harm in respect of neighbours' living conditions, ecology or highway safety is a neutral factor that weighs neither for nor against the proposals. Although the Council did not request alternate designs, my decision turns on the evidence and planning merits of the proposal before me.

Conclusion and Recommendation

13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I do not find there are material considerations that indicate I should make a decision other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Emma Grierson

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

H Porter

INSPECTOR