



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2023

by H Jones BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/22/3309404

Beadnell Towers Hotel, The Wynding, Beadnell NE67 5AY

- 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 David Wilson (Henson Property Northumberland Limited) against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01112/FUL, dated 17 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 28 June 2022.
 - The development is replacement of existing store and smoking shelter within the rear car park with a shipping container to provide outdoor food and drink service ancillary to Beadnell Towers Hotel.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A timber clad servery structure is situated within the rear car park. The cladding on the west elevation contains an access door not shown on the submitted plans. A timber shelter is also located within the car park, opposite the east elevation of the servery. The layout of the parking bays in the car park and the car park access differs from the existing and proposed layout plans. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the plans submitted.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Beadnell Conservation Area (CA), preserve the setting of the Grade II listed Beadnell Towers Hotel and, conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is the car park associated with the Grade II listed Beadnell Towers Hotel. The car park is a loosely square shaped area with the hotel building flanking it on the northern side. A stone wall forms the boundary of the car park with The Wynding, through which a gap provides vehicular access. On the opposite side, the gable elevation and rear garden wall of a residential property borders the car park together with a pedestrian access point which links to the village green. The southern boundary of the car park is formed by fencing and hedgerow with residential properties beyond.

5. The southernmost and easternmost sections of the CA include, and are bound by, coastline and include areas of rocky shoreline, Beadnell Harbour and traditional lime kilns. Within the northern section of the CA a characterful centre to the settlement is provided for by St Ebba's Church, the verdant qualities of its churchyard and village green beside it, and the regular pattern of development surrounding it, which includes the Beadnell Towers Hotel. Landmark and traditional buildings such as the Craster Arms public house and Beadnell House are located in this village centre. I find this coastal landscape, evidence of historic harbour features, historic village core and landmark buildings contribute positively to the character and appearance of the CA and its significance.
6. The Beadnell Towers Hotel is a large and striking building which incorporates prominent and traditional design features most clearly exhibited on its west and south facing elevations. The walls incorporate a stucco finish and stone surrounds to the windows whilst the roof has a natural slate covering. I find that this architectural interest contributes considerably to the significance of the building as does the historic interest of providing evidence of the history of hostelries within Beadnell. Given that the appearance of the hotel can be so readily appreciated on the approaches to it including along The Wynding, and the village green next to St Ebba's Church, the visual setting of the hotel building contributes meaningfully to its significance.
7. Being a largely open space, the car park subject of the appeal allows for views of the south facing elevation of the hotel building from The Wynding and views across it toward the buildings which partly surround the village green in the village core. Together with its association with the historic hotel building itself, for these reasons, the car park contributes to the significance of the CA and forms a part of the setting of the listed building.
8. The appeal site is within the AONB. As a traditional coastal village with a small harbour, rocky shoreline, dune grasslands and, an ordered settlement pattern at its core, Beadnell exhibits distinctive qualities typical of the AONB.
9. Although the shipping container forming the servery has been clad in order to improve its aesthetic, due to the timber finish and box-like appearance, it nevertheless appears as a relatively utilitarian structure. Being closely positioned to the southern elevation of the hotel, from The Wynding and the car park itself, the servery and this elevation are viewed together. The servery appears incongruous, jarring with the architecture and materials of the hotel building.
10. The servery backs onto the stone gable end of a property facing the village green and St Ebba's Church, whilst the mature trees within the centre can be seen to the rear of the structure across the car park. I find the appearance of the servery to be at odds with this backdrop, detracting from the character of the village core which is exhibited in such views.
11. The development would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA and fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II listed hotel building. The harm to each of the designated heritage assets would be less than substantial. In causing harm to these heritage assets, I also find that the development causes harm to the traditional coastal village qualities of Beadnell and, in turn, that the development would also fail to conserve or enhance the beauty of the AONB.

12. Having regard to the statutory duties in Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the harm to the designated heritage assets would be a matter of considerable importance and weight. Similarly, and having regard to the statutory duty in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, great weight should be given to the conservation and enhancement of the beauty of the AONB.
13. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of other developments which they consider provide precedents for the appeal scheme. I find the site context of the timber clad container, the two metal shipping containers and the seafood restaurant each located close to the Beadnell Bay car park to differ significantly from the appeal site. The appeal site is set amongst the historic core of the village whilst, in contrast, the area around the Beadnell Bay car park is partly characterised by a number of modern buildings, undeveloped land and caravan sites. The ice cream kiosk near Embleton is located within a more open countryside location. The container located at the pub in King Street is within Seahouses, and therefore within a different settlement to that in this case. For these reasons these cited developments are not a strong influence in my decision.
14. The development that has taken place at the nearby Craster Arms, itself a listed building within the historic centre of Beadnell, has a context more akin with the appeal scheme and I note that the Council resolved to grant planning permission for that development at the same planning committee as the appeal scheme was presented. Nevertheless, the specific appearance of the structures within the beer garden at the Craster Arms differs from the appeal scheme and, moreover, the development at the Craster Arms is not before me for my determination and I must consider the appeal scheme on its merits and on the basis of the evidence before me. I have identified harm in this case, and that developments elsewhere bearing some similarities with the appeal case are present does not justify this harm.
15. I acknowledge that the servery would provide greater dining choice for Beadnell customers, and that economic benefits would be derived from this, including from diversifying and expanding the food and drink offer of the business and providing employment. Some social benefit would also be drawn from any increase in customers socialising. I also appreciate that, whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has now eased, the hospitality industry will, nevertheless, still be recovering from its effects and that some temporary provisions put in place to assist businesses may have now ended, whilst a culmination of factors may have led to rising costs and customers having less disposable income. This may all have occurred at a time when significant investment into the hotel has taken place.
16. However, I have little substantive evidence before me of the particular contribution that the servery would make to the business as a whole or what the specific effects may be without it. Furthermore, I have identified harm caused by the particular siting and design of this servery, and it has not been shown to me that the appeal scheme is the only option to deliver an outdoor servery. Paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) does provide advice in respect of those exceptional circumstances in which major developments within an AONB may be permitted in the public interest. However, that advice specifically relates to major development and, I find that the proposed servery is of a more modest nature. Even if I were to

conclude that advisory paragraph applies, I have very little information before me of the specific effects of the development upon the local economy or that it could not be provided for by some other means.

17. Therefore, and having regard to paragraph 202 of the Framework, I have no substantive evidence before me that there would be any public benefits derived from the development that would outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage assets.
18. I have given consideration as to whether the grant of planning permission for a temporary period of up five years would be appropriate. However, given the totality of harm which I have identified would be caused to the two designated heritage assets and to the AONB, and having regard to the weight to which I afford to this, a temporary planning permission would also be unacceptable.
19. Accordingly, the development would be contrary to Policies ENV5, ENV7 and ENV9 of the Northumberland Local Plan, 2022 and Policy 12 of the North Northumberland Coast Neighbourhood Plan, 2018. In summary, and amongst other matters, these policies seek to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB, ensure the conservation and enhancement of Northumberland's heritage assets and protect the historic core of Beadnell, whilst ensuring that any less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets that would arise from a proposal be weighed against its public benefits. The development would also be contrary to advice contained within the Framework, including at paragraph 176 which seeks to avoid or minimise any adverse effects within AONBs whilst attributing great weight to conserving and enhancing their beauty.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons, having taken account of the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

H Jones

INSPECTOR