



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2024

by A Caines BSc(Hons) MSc TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/23/3334738

The Black Swan Inn, 2 Union Street, Seahouses NE68 7RT

- 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 Dawson (Black Swan Inn) against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 22/03755/FUL, dated 5 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is a timber bin store.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a timber bin store at The Black Swan Inn, 2 Union Street, Seahouses NE68 7RT in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/03755/FUL, dated 5 October 2022, and the plans submitted with it: Location Plan & Existing Site Plan; Proposed Site Plan; Front Elevation; Side Elvs & Floorplan.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development is already in place, so I am considering the proposal retrospectively.
3. On 19 December 2023, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Other than a change to the relevant paragraph numbers, the revised Framework does not materially alter the national policy approach in respect of the main issues raised in this appeal and I have had regard to the latest version in reaching my Decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are whether the character or appearance of the Seahouses Conservation Area (the CA) would be preserved or enhanced, and the effect on the landscape and scenic beauty of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB).

Reasons

5. The appeal site is situated within the CA, which encompasses the working harbour and surrounding streets. In so far as it is relevant to this appeal, the CA derives some of its special interest and significance from its small-scale streetscapes and a mixed-use character with a tight grain of modest 19th century fisherman's cottages, former stores and workshops, as well as a number of public houses and shops. Seahouses also lies within the AONB, the importance of which is rooted in its coastal landscapes which are of substantial

- natural and historic value, and I am mindful that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty within such areas.
6. The Black Swan Inn is located at the corner of North Street and Union Street. It is a traditional public house of stone and slate construction, with timber doors and sliding sash windows. The Council considers that the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA, and I concur.
 7. The bin store has been sited against the outside wall to the pub's courtyard on the Union Street frontage. It is of timber construction with a lean-to form and provides covered storage for the commercial bins associated with the business.
 8. The location of the bin store means that it is highly visible from the public realm. However, I do not consider that this in itself makes the development harmful. The structure is of relatively modest proportions, with a simple design commensurate with its function, and materials which relate appropriately to the mixed character of the surroundings which includes old and new development. Moreover, its siting does not interfere with or detract from any of the important architectural features at the front of the building. Nor does it encroach beyond the raised patio/pavement area in front of the pub, which also contains other items such as planters and tables and chairs that help to draw some attention away from the structure.
 9. I note that a previous planning permission made provision for bin storage within the courtyard. However, circumstances have changed and I share the appellant's concerns that such an arrangement could have negative implications on the use and enjoyment of the courtyard as an outdoor seating area. It therefore seems likely that the bins would have been kept out in the street in any event, as is the case for most properties in Union Street. The bin store has the benefit of containing the bins and screening them from view within an appropriately designed structure, while also denying seagull access and the nuisance that brings. It is particularly telling that a neighbour directly opposite considers the bin store as an improvement to their outlook and strongly supports its retention.
 10. For all these reasons, I am satisfied that the bin store is not a harmful addition to the street scene and wider surrounding area.
 11. I therefore conclude that the character and appearance of the CA would be preserved and that the development would not adversely impact upon the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. As such, the proposal complies with statutory requirements and the design, heritage, and landscape protection aims of Policies ENV1, ENV5 and ENV9 of the Northumberland Local Plan (2022); Policy 10 of the North Northumberland Coast Neighbourhood Plan (2018); and Chapters 15 and 16 of the Framework.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR