
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 April 2024

by B Pattison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/23/3325097

Eastlea Cottage, North Street, Punnetts Town, East Sussex TN21 9DT

- 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 D Barrett against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2023/0978/F, dated 12 April 2023, was refused by notice dated 21 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as single storey extension.
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This decision is issued in accordance with Section 56(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and supersedes the decision issued on 25 April 2024.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey extension at Eastlea Cottage, North Street, Punnetts Town, East Sussex TN21 9DT in accordance with the terms of the application Ref WD/2023/0978/F, dated 12 April 2023, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Framework was updated in December 2023, and accordingly for the purposes of this decision I have referred to the latest version of the Framework. The content of the Framework has not been materially altered in respect of the main issues which I have considered. Therefore, it has not been necessary to seek further views from the main parties in this instance.
3. In November 2023, the National Landscapes Association reported that all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) had become National Landscapes. However, the Framework continues to refer to them as AONBs. In this decision I have used the term AONB, consistent with the evidence and the Framework. The legal designation and policy status of such areas is unaffected, whichever term is used.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area which is in the High Weald AONB.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located at the northern edge of Punnetts Town. It is bordered by a public footpath which runs along its southern boundary. Since the appeal site is within an AONB, great weight should be given to conserving and

enhancing landscape and scenic beauty, as set out in paragraph 182 of the Framework.

6. The surrounding properties are generally detached, two storey in height and constructed in a mix of red brick and hanging tiles. The plots of dwellings follow a loose and informal layout, with some properties constructed very close to the highway and others, such as Green Pastures and Fernleigh, located a distance from North Street and accessed via a small lane. Whilst dwellings are visible from public views on Shaw Road, the street scene is green and rural in character, marked by mature vegetation on the front boundaries of some properties.
7. Unlike the neighbouring houses, the appeal property is a single storey re-built stable block which is now in residential use. It is finished with external horizontal timber cladding, and has a pitched, tiled roof. Due to the mature vegetation on the site's front boundary and the levels change within the site, the property is not prominent within views from North Street.
8. Whilst it would add depth to the rear of the property and span its width, in my view, the design and positioning of the extension would be compatible with the simple rural style of the property. Its simple gable roof addition would be no higher than the existing ridge, and the new "bonnet hip roof" form would sit noticeably lower in height than the existing roof. Whilst this element would feature a flat roof area it would be surrounded by a hipped roof form and would be located to the rear and modest in scale. As a result it would not be unduly prominent.
9. The proposal would retain the building's L-shaped floor plan. The appeal property would remain a single storey building, and the use of matching timber cladding would assist in retaining its low key rural character. Overall, the extension would remain subordinate in scale to the main dwelling and would not be out of keeping with the existing property nor be a dominant addition.
10. The most significant characteristics of this part of the AONB are its gently rolling hills scattered with small fields and woodland areas. The site is located at the edge of an existing cluster of dwellings within the distinct boundary between the built form of neighbouring houses and the open land beyond it. The building is visible in some long distance views from within the AONB, although the mature boundary planting around the property's garden screens and filters views of the property. Where it would be apparent in longer range views from the open countryside the proposal would be perceived as a relatively inconspicuous feature which would be consolidated into the bulk of the existing building.
11. While the timber decked terrace would increase the amount of built form on the appeal site and within the AONB, the scale of the development would not be excessive. Rather it would be low level, relatively modest, and the structure would be open.
12. The proposal would be visible in angled views from North Street along the driveways which are located either side of the host dwelling. It would also be visible in views from the public footpath which runs to the south of the appeal site. I noted that other houses such as Green Pastures, Fernleigh and Eastlea are equally visible in views from the footpath. Furthermore, in this instance, as

I have found that the proposal would be a sympathetic addition to the host property, its visibility from the footpath would not cause harm.

13. Overall, the scale and massing of the extension would not be visually dominant in the landscape. It would therefore conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. In coming to this view, I have taken into account the site's detailed planning history, including the previous removal of permitted development rights by planning condition.
14. The Council has referred to floor space percentage increases set out within the Wealden Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2008) (SPD). However, from the submitted evidence, the assessment of percentage increases is reserved for buildings located outside the AONB. As I have found that the proposal would enhance or maintain the essential character and quality of the AONB, the proposal complies with the aims of the SPD in this regard.
15. The proposal would not be unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the area, including the appeal property and the AONB. It accords with Policies GD2, EN6, EN27 and DC19 of the Wealden Local Plan (1998) and Spatial Planning Objectives SPO1, SPO13 and Policy WCS14 of the Core Strategy Local Plan (2013), and the SPD. Amongst other things, these require development to conserve and enhance the AONB, enhance or reinforce local distinctiveness, and require extensions to dwellings to have no adverse impact on the character or appearance of the dwelling or the surrounding area.
16. The proposal also complies with paragraph 182 of the Framework which requires that in AONBs great weight be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty.

Conditions

17. I have had regard to the various planning conditions that have been suggested. I have considered them against the tests in the Framework and the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). I have made such amendments as necessary to comply with those documents and for clarity and consistency.
18. In addition to the standard time limit, I have imposed an approved plans condition in the interests of certainty.
19. A condition requiring that the external facing materials used in the construction match the existing materials at the property is necessary in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

20. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the proposed development would accord with the development plan and the Framework. The appeal is therefore allowed.

B Pattison

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Plans and Elevations as Existing (35-22-100) and Plans and Elevations as Proposed, including Site Location Plan (35-22-200/B)
- 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

END OF SCHEDULE