



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 May 2024

by R Cahalane BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/23/3332094

32 Winchester Road, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU32 3PA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Elliot (Bryan Frost Chimneys) against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/23/02185/HOUS, dated 23 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 15 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is raising of roof height and addition of dormers to convert loft space of double garage into office space.
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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 character and appearance of the site and the surrounding landscape.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located just off Winchester Road that connects the town of Petersfield with the village of Stroud. For planning policy purposes, the appeal site lies in the open countryside and the South Downs National Park. The site is at some distance from its nearest neighbours and therefore has a rural feel. Despite its proximity to the nearby settlements and main road networks, the appeal site occupies a prominent position along Winchester Road. A narrow footway runs immediately to the front of the appeal site and a Public Right of Way (PROW) runs along a field to its rear.
4. The appeal site contains a detached single storey dwelling set back from Winchester Road by the footway and hedge boundary. The existing dwelling is of painted brick with a tile roof, and is characterised by its modest scale, low eaves and ridge height and large front gable. Despite nearby planting, the dwelling is read as a modest cottage and unassuming in the context of Winchester Road and the wider rolling countryside landscape that surrounds it.
5. A single storey detached double garage, the subject of this appeal, is located across the site's vehicular access. The garage is set slightly forward of the main dwelling on the plot, and on what I observed to be slightly higher ground. Although the garage has a relatively large footprint, the slope of its roof and overall ridge height make it appear subordinate in scale and form to the principle building and unobtrusive in the wider landscape context.

6. The appeal scheme would involve an upward extension and addition of a flat roof dormer to the existing garage, to facilitate the conversion of the loft space for use as an office. While the proposed eaves and ridge would not exceed the those of the main dwelling, the altered roof would be notably steeper than that of the existing garage. When combined with the proposed additional height, this would cause the garage to appear far more conspicuous on the site and from Winchester Road.
7. The scale of the existing dwelling would still be greater overall than the garage, which would have a garage door and would not be a dwelling. Nevertheless, the proposed development would cause the garage structure to dominate the appeal site and compete with the modest proportions and diminutive cottage character of the main dwelling. This would lead to a harmful juxtaposition between the buildings and cause the garage to appear obtrusive on the site and the wider landscape context.
8. The appellant has sought to overcome the Council's objections to a previous scheme (Ref SDNP/22/03399/HOUS). I note the design of the extant proposed rear dormer would be satisfactory to the Council, and that the proposed roof height increase would be to achieve home office use of the garage to overcome a shortage of space. However, even with the use of matching materials and incorporation of part-hipped roof ends in an attempt to reduce the bulk and reflect the form of the existing garage roof, the proposal would still feature a notably steep roof pitch and high gable ends. Although views of the proposed development from Winchester Road would be fleeting, or partly screened by vegetation, the proposed development would cause the outbuilding to dominate the site and appear harmfully out of place in the wider context.
9. I therefore find that the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding landscape. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to Policies SD4, SD5 and SD31 of the South Downs Local Plan (2019) (LP) which require, amongst other things, development to respect the established character of the local area, through sensitive and high-quality design that makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area. There would also be conflict with the Council's Extensions and Replacement Dwellings Technical Advice Note, 2023 (TAN), insofar as it seeks to resist proposals that, irrespective of compliance with size-based thresholds, will not in any event respect local character, fail to complement the scale, height, massing, appearance and character of the existing dwelling, or have an overall adverse impact on the landscape of the National Park. The proposed development would also fail to accord with the Framework, insofar as it seeks to ensure proposals are sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, and gives great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks.
10. The proposed development would not harm highway safety, neighbours' living conditions, ecology or the nearby PRow. The matter of dark skies protection could be dealt with by a suitably worded condition, and the proposed floorspace would also be within the prescribed policy limit. However, these are neutral considerations in the overall planning balance. On the other hand, the harm identified means the proposed development conflicts with the development plan read as a whole and material considerations do not indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with it.

Other Matters

11. The appellant has drawn my attention to a garage/office that was approved by the Council. While I do not know the detailed planning considerations that applied in that case, I note that the main dwelling in that case was two storey and the site context is different. In any event, that the Council granted consent for a dominant building on another site in a different location does not justify the harm I have identified. The Officer Report refers to a recently dismissed appeal (APP/Y9507/D/22/3290067) for a scheme it describes as "a two-storey detached garage of a similar design". The appellant states that this is not comparable, as it proposed a new building; it is also several miles away from the appeal site. On the available evidence, I do not consider either example provided offers useful justification for the appeal proposal, which has been determined on its own merits and the site-specific circumstances.

Conclusion

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

R Cahalane

INSPECTOR