



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2024

by C Rose BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/24/3337008

Tuckers Cottage, Watton Lane, Bridport, Dorset DT6 5JZ

- 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 and Mrs G Copp against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/FUL/2023/02732.
 - The development is New Dwelling (amended scheme to WD/D/18/000204).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Subsequent to the decision of the Council on the planning application, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) became National Landscapes. Therefore, in relation to this appeal, reference to the National Landscape refers to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as referred to by the main parties.
3. At the time of my site visit the construction of the dwelling was considerably advanced and appeared to accord with the submitted plans. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal based on those plans.
4. I have taken the description of development as set out above from the application form as neither party has provided written confirmation that a revised description has been agreed. I have however removed reference to the proposal being retrospective as this is not an act of development.
5. The site is located within 5km of the recreation buffer of the Chesil and the Fleet Special Area of Conservation (SAC). I will return to this matter below.

Main Issue

6. The main issue for the appeal is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, having regard to the site's location within the Dorset National Landscape (DNL).

Reasons

7. The DNL is a landscape of national importance. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB's. This guidance is reflected in Policy ENV1 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 (LP) that states that development which harms the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the AONB, including its sense of remoteness, will not be permitted.

8. The site lies within the DNL which the West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment (February 2009) (WDLCA) identifies as falling within the Brit Valley. In this location the landscape is characterised by woodlands on rolling valley sides with large arable and grassland fields enclosed by trimmed hedgerows. The WDLCA further states that detrimental features include some agricultural buildings and settlement edges that are visually intrusive with the town of Bridport in particular having an urbanising impact on its fringes.
9. The appeal site is located at the fringe of Bridport close to a range of buildings and grassland fields enclosed by hedgerows characteristic of the area. The site is visually separated from farm buildings to the east by planting, and physically separated by the range of buildings to the south, that sit at a much lower level, by a track forming part of Public Right of Way W18/22 (PROW) that runs directly towards and alongside the appeal site. The site is further separated from dwellings to the north by planting.
10. The separation from surrounding built form, and position of the site on rising land, results in it having a much closer visual association with the open land within the DNL than with the nearby built form, particularly when viewed from the PROW that passes the site and when viewed from across the valley from parts of Public Right of Way W18/93 and W18/28. Furthermore, the site is very prominent in views on approach from the PROW due to its position on open rising land and very close proximity.
11. The development seeks to retain the dwelling that is in a slightly different position to the dwelling previously consented¹, in a larger plot and with an amended design and ground level. Amongst other things, the amended design includes a greater footprint, height and width of dwelling, larger basement and terrace above, and a considerably larger two-storey rear projection.
12. Due to the increased footprint, height, width and bulk of the building, combined with its elevated position, on approach from the south and west along the PROW, and when passing the building, the proposal has a very pronounced and overbearing appearance that visually dominates the immediate area and PROW. For the same reasons, the building is imposing in the wider landscape and on approach from the west appearing over-scaled when viewed against the backdrop of the surrounding hillside.
13. I recognise that the building previously consented on the site would have a degree of prominence due to its height, bulk and elevated position. However, it would be lower, narrower, have a much smaller rear projection and less outdoor space. By reason of the increased size in relation to these matters, the proposal is overly dominant and incongruous and as a result harmful to the character, special qualities and natural beauty of this part of the DNL.
14. Furthermore, given the size of the enlarged plot/outdoor space as shown on the Block, Location, Roof and Site Plan², likely associated paraphernalia and maintained residential appearance of the outdoor space extending up the hillside once completed, would provide an uncharacteristic and harmful extension of residential form further into the landscape. The enlarged plot would be particularly visible from the PROW passing the site and from the Public Rights of Ways across the valley referenced above. From here, the site is

¹ WD/D/18/000204 and WD/D/19/001996

² Drawing number 17/138/101 Rev C

viewed within the wider context of the DNL set within woodlands on a rolling valley side with large grassland fields with sporadic built form and little visible outdoor space. The introduction of an enlarged plot/outdoor space with associated paraphernalia and activity would have an urbanising effect upon the appearance of the area. This would be alien in the wider context and represent a further detrimental feature at the settlement edge detracting from the scenic, open rural nature of the area failing to conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the DNL.

15. I have had regard to the provision of landscaping to screen the site, but such planting would take time to establish, would not screen the building or site in totality and would not screen the outdoor space from across the valley given its position on rising topography.
16. I therefore find that the development would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area and DNL to which I have given great weight. As such, the proposal would conflict with the requirements of Policies ENV1, ENV10, ENV12 and HOUS6 of the LP, Policies D1, D5, D8 and L1 of the Made Bridport Neighbourhood Plan and Section 15 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these stipulate, that development proposals will only be allowed where they do not harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the AONB, conserve and enhance the local landscape character and scenic beauty of the AONB, are compatible with the character of the area, incorporate landscape solutions to soften the urbanising impact on new development and are of a high-quality design.

Other Considerations

17. While there may be dwellings of a similar size in the hamlet, they are not clearly viewed in association with the appeal site, and I have to consider the appeal proposal on its merits. As a result, this does not outweigh the harm I have identified above to the character and appearance of the area and DNL.
18. I have had regard to the lack of harm to biodiversity and living conditions but as these are requirements of local planning policies and national guidance, they are neutral in my consideration. I have also had regard to the appellant stating that the development comprises a high level of insulation and energy efficiency. However, given the lack of details with regard to these matters, I give it limited weight.
19. The appeal site is within the recreational buffer of the SAC. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I do not need to consider this matter or the related duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 further.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. No material considerations, including the Framework, individually or cumulatively, indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

C Rose

INSPECTOR