



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2024

by R J Redford MTCP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/W/24/3343217

1 and 2 Pest Houses, Petersfield Road, West Meon GU32 1JS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by F Northbrook against South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/23/05261/HOUS.
 - The development proposed is a two storey extension to the rear of a semi-detached pair of cottages.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a 2-storey extension to the rear of a semi-detached pair of cottages at 1 and 2 Pest Houses, Petersfield Road, West Meon GU32 1JS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref SDNP/23/05261/HOUS, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos: A.001; A.002; A.003; A.004; A.005; A.011; and A.013.
 - 3) The external materials of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing dwellings.
 - 4) The actions outlined within the Ecosystems Services Statement (received 12 December 2023) shall be implemented within one month following the completion of the development hereby approved or, in the case of soft landscaping, during the next available planting season following the completion of the development, and thereafter retained.
 - 5) In the event that only one property completes the extension hereby approved, the side elevation must be completed in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Procedural Matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated on 12 December 2024. However, the sections pertinent to this appeal have not changed to such an extent as to affect the matters raised. It has not therefore been necessary to seek their views, however the revised version has been referenced in this decision.

Background and Main Issue

3. The Authority has confirmed that it would have granted planning permission had it been empowered to do so, and no objections were made during the application or at appeal. However, the appeal site is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP).
4. National Parks are designated for the purposes of a) conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and b) promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities by the public. Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 places a duty upon me to have regard to these purposes in this decision.
5. As the main parties agree the proposal would not impact the cultural heritage of the SDNP, and there is nothing before me to conclude otherwise, the main issue is whether the proposed development would conserve and enhance the natural beauty and wildlife of the SDNP.

Reasons

6. The appeal site constitutes a pair of semi-detached dwellings which have a series of rear extensions. They are located in the countryside surrounded by a small number of other residential properties and nestled into a setting of fields and woodland, characteristic of this part of the SDNP.
7. The proposal would rationalise the mix of rear extensions on the semi-detached dwellings and would retain the largely symmetrical treatment of both properties. The extensions would be slightly larger than the prescribed percentage increase within the South Downs Local Plan (LP) Policy SD31. However, the difference is marginal and the compact nature of the proposal against the proportions of the host dwellings would sit comfortably within the surrounding landscape without detriment to the natural beauty of the SDNP.
8. An interested party has inferred there may be bats on the appeal site. However, the appeal site has not been identified by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre as being a designated site or priority habitat for any protected species, which would have triggered the Authority to require additional information such as an ecology assessment. Therefore, without anything to substantiate the site being used by bats and as observed during the site visit, the dwellings are in a reasonable state of repair, I am satisfied that in this instance, on a balance of probability the proposal would not harm a protected species.
9. Nevertheless, it is noted that in the unlikely event bats were to be found during construction other mechanisms are in place to protect the species, as set out in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). It is also noted that the actions set out in the Ecosystems Services Statement include the installation of bat boxes and native planting which would constitute an improvement for the potential wildlife using the site.
10. Therefore, the proposed development would conserve and enhance the natural beauty and wildlife of the SDNP in accordance with LP policies SD4, SD5, SD7, and SD31, insofar as they seek development to respect the local character and appearance of an area and the purposes of a National Park.

11. It is noted that within its Statement of Case, the Authority has referred to LP Policy SD24. This relates to equestrian uses which is not pertinent to the scheme before me, and therefore I have disregarded it.

Conditions

12. The Authority has suggested several conditions which I have considered against the advice in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. As a result, I have amended them for consistency and clarity.
13. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have imposed a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and in matching materials, as this provides certainty and protects the appearance of the host dwellings. The condition requiring that the actions set out in the Ecosystems Services Statement are undertaken, is necessary to ensure the positive impacts to the natural environment are achieved.
14. I have, however, altered the wording of the condition relating to the partial erection of the extension. This will ensure the Authority maintains control of the detailing of the side elevation to protect the living conditions of the occupants of the adjacent property, and the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above the appeal scheme would comply with the development plan when read as a whole and there are no sufficiently weighted material considerations, including the Framework, which would indicate a decision otherwise. The appeal is, therefore, allowed.

RJ Redford

INSPECTOR