



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 January 2025

by Jennifer Wallace BA(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/24/3346436

Blue House, St Mary in the Fields, Mayfield, East Sussex TN20 6BG

- 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 Sion Thaysen against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref is WD/2024/0333/F.
 - The development proposed is erection of garden studio to replace previously demolished garden shed.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of garden studio at Blue House, St Mary in the Fields, Mayfield, East Sussex TN20 6BG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref WD/2024/0333/F, 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 01 – Site Location; 04 - Proposed Site Plan; 05 – Floor & Roof Plan; 06 – Elevations 1; 07 – Elevations 2; 08 – Sections A-A; 09 – Sections B-B; 10 – Sections C-C; and 11 – Sections D-D.

Preliminary Matters

2. On 12 December 2024, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal have not been materially amended. As a result, I consider that there is no requirement for me to seek further submissions and I am satisfied that no party's interests have been prejudiced by my taking this approach. I will refer to the updated paragraph numbers in this decision.
3. I have removed extraneous wording that does not form part of the development to be carried out from my decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to heritage assets and the national landscape.

Reasons

5. The site lies within the Mayfield and Coggins Mill Conservation Area (MCMCA) where s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing

the character or appearance of that area. The Council has also identified the Blue House as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) due to it forming part of the grouping of properties at St Mary in the Fields. Section 16 of the Framework provides detailed advice regarding the consideration of heritage assets.

6. The significance of the MCMCA lies in the mostly linear arrangement of the historic village along a ridge and development representing the village's medieval origins and evolution through the early-mid 20th century. Its special interest derives from its historic form and grain, as well as the inherent architectural and historic qualities of its buildings and spaces.
7. The draft MCMCA Appraisal (the Appraisal) identifies St Mary in the Fields as being developed in the inter-war period as a rural children's home consisting of a chapel and houses arranged around a central quadrangle, although the properties are now in private ownership. It is identified as 'key unlisted buildings or structures' in the Appraisal. The layout of the properties around the quadrangle, accessed via footpaths within it gives a structure to the layout of the area which is softened by the use of hedges as the predominant boundary treatment. The quadrangle is individually identified as a feature of the character area, contributing to the character of the group of buildings and history. While I have not been provided with the map that shows important views to and from the Conservation Area, I am satisfied this would be one such view given the open nature of the view from the width of the space and steeply sloping topography. These factors set out the significance of the Blue House as an NDHA.
8. The proposal would see the introduction of a detached structure between the Blue House and the footpath access to Southdene and the semi-detached property comprising Maygarland and Dovestone Cottage beyond. It would have the simple form of a rectangular building with a pitched roof. Its ridge height would be only slightly lower than that of the Blue House. However, it would clearly be a smaller, ancillary structure to the main dwelling which has a notable floorspace despite its modest height. Taken in conjunction with the proposed use of larch boarding, the proposal would be viewed as a subordinate structure to the main dwelling and would not appear unduly tall.
9. The proposal would also be positioned well within the site boundary. It would project slightly beyond the main side elevation of the existing building, but not beyond the side projection. As a result of this positioning, the proposal would not be a prominent feature in the layout around the quadrangle or impinge on the views out of the MCMCA to the surrounding landscape. Given the position of the site along the footpath, the varying form of surrounding development and the topography, this siting would not appear incongruous or uncharacteristic.
10. For these reasons, I consider the proposal would have a neutral effect, and would therefore preserve, the character and appearance of the MCMCA. It would also have a neutral effect on the significance of the Blue House as an NDHA.
11. The site falls within the High Weald National Landscape (NL) which is designated for the purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty and section 85(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) places a duty on me to seek to further these purposes. Paragraph 189 of the Framework confirms that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in the NL. The proposed development of a small structure, nestled between

existing development within an established settlement, would have no effect on, and would therefore conserve, the landscape and scenic beauty of the NL.

12. The proposal would therefore have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to heritage assets and the national landscape. It would be in accordance with Wealden Local Plan (1998) (LP) Saved Policy GD1 which supports development within settlement boundaries which complies with other policies in the LP, LP Saved Policy EN6 and Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 (CS) Spatial Planning Objective SPO1 which seek to protect distinct landscapes and support development where it conserves the natural beauty and character of the landscape, Saved LP Policy EN19 and CS Spatial Planning Objective SPO2 which seeks to protect the intrinsic quality of the historic environment and confirm development in conservation areas will not be permitted where it does not preserve character, LP Saved Policies EN27 and HG10 which support extensions and alteration of existing dwellings where layout, scale, and materials are appropriate and sympathetic in relation to existing buildings, CS Spatial Planning Objective SPO13 which seeks the development of high quality, attractive living environments which promote local distinctiveness and CS Policy WCS14 which sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Conditions

13. The Council has suggested that conditions be imposed with respect to time limit and approved plans only. This is reasonable and necessary to define the terms of the permission.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

Jennifer Wallace

INSPECTOR