Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 April 2025

by A James BSc (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/24/3352960
The Oast House, Shepherds Hill, Buxted, East Sussex TN22 4PX

- 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 Justin Fisher against the decision of Wealden District Council.
- The application reference is WD/2024/0913.
- The development proposed is replacement of existing conservatory with new garden room.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for replacement of existing conservatory with new garden room at The Oast House, Shepherds Hill, Buxted, East Sussex TN22 4PX in accordance with the terms of the application, reference: WD/2024/0913 and 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 numbers: 495_00_001: Proposed Site and Location Plans and 495_10_01/A: Proposed Plans and Elevations.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the Council issued its decision notice, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been revised, with the latest version published on 12 December 2024 and updated on 7 February 2025. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal remain broadly the same. As a result, I have not sought further submissions on the revised Framework, and I am satisfied that no party has been prejudiced by my approach.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the area, having particular regard to the High Weald National Landscape.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a former oasthouse, which dates back to the 19th century. It comprises of a circular oast and attached stowage. The cowl is no longer present. The oast was converted into a dwelling in the 20th century. Although the appeal property is not listed, it is of some age and contributes towards the social and

agricultural history of the locality. As a result, it is deemed to be a non-designated heritage asset.

5. The appeal site lies within the High Weald National Landscape. The Framework requires that great weight is given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of National Landscapes. The landscape surrounding the appeal site is predominantly in agricultural use and is characterised by irregular shaped fields and woodland. There is sporadic development in the locality, including dwellings and historic farmsteads, which are set within an attractive, rural landscape.

6. The significance of the appeal property as a non-designated heritage asset derives from the simplicity of its circular roundel, rectangular shaped stowage and its relationship to the wider countryside. The appeal property is set back from the highway and set within a well landscaped garden. The roundel is visible above the boundary vegetation and is a prominent feature within the landscape. The oast contains some domestic features, including a conservatory, chimney, porch and domestic-style fenestration. Although these features are not sympathetic to the agricultural heritage of the building, overall, the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and the National Landscape.

7. To the rear of the oast is a white painted, timber framed conservatory and a single storey rear projection, which is finished with black timber cladding. The conservatory is in a poor condition and by reason of its design and extent of glazing is an incongruous and overtly domestic addition to the building. There is an area of decking between the rear projection and the conservatory, which has steps that lead down to the garden. The rear elevation of the oast currently has a disjointed appearance.

8. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing conservatory and replace it with a contemporary, single storey extension. The proposal would extend across the stowage element of the building and adjoin the existing rear projection. The proposal would not extend as far rearwards and would be lower in height when compared to the existing rear projection. The proposal by reason of its size, design and siting would be subservient to the host building and would be clearly read as a modern addition to the building. Given the single-storey nature of the proposal and the mature boundary treatment, at most, only a glimpse of the proposal would be visible from the public realm.

9. The proposed windows by reason of their size and design would be out of keeping on this former agricultural building. Although larger in size than the existing windows, the proposed windows would provide a contemporary take on the existing windows. In this case, I find that the proposal would be less domestic in appearance, when compared to the existing conservatory. Given the extent of glazing, the proposal would have a lightweight appearance which would also allow views of the brickwork on the stowage to be retained. While the proposal would cover a greater proportion of the stowage than the existing conservatory, the proposal seeks to remove unsympathetic plasterwork, which would better reveal the historic brickwork.

10. The proposed extension would be finished with black timber cladding, which would complement the materials on the existing rear projection. The use of black timber cladding would respect the agricultural heritage of the building. The proposed

extension would have a zinc roof, which would feature two rooflights. The roofing materials would be of high quality and would provide a more appropriate finish when compared to the roof of the existing conservatory. Two rooflights would fit seamlessly into the roof slope, following the regular pattern of the zinc standing seams. As a result, I do not find that the proposed rooflights would result in visual clutter. Furthermore, the proposal would result in a more unified rear elevation.

11. Overall, the proposed extension would preserve the character and appearance of the host property, which is a non-designated heritage asset and it would preserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Landscape. The proposal would comply with saved Policies GD2, EN1, EN6, EN27, DC17 and DC19 of the Wealden Local Plan December 1998 and Spatial Planning Objectives SPO1, SPO2 and SPO13 and Policy WCS14 of the adopted Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan February 2013. These policies among other things require that proposals conserve or enhance the natural beauty and character of the landscape; protect the intrinsic quality of the historic environment; and, are of good design that is appropriate in size and character relative to the original dwelling and does not visually dominate or adversely change the character of the existing building.

Other Matters

12. 'The Gallery' (Ref: 1286591) is a Grade II listed building, which is located a short distance away from the appeal site. It was built in the mid-18th century as a stables but has later been converted into a dwelling. There is also a Grade II* listed building a short distance away from the appeal site, which is known as 'Shepherds Hill including terracing, steps, gate piers and garden house' (Ref: 1028320). This building was formerly an eighteenth century farmhouse, which was remodelled in the 20th century. In accordance with the statutory duty imposed by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building in the determination of this appeal. Given the intervening boundary treatment and the size and siting of the proposal, I am satisfied that there would be no harm to the special interest of these listed buildings through changes to their setting.

13. While the Council's decision notice refers to conflict with the Wealden Design Guide 2008, it is not clear from the evidence before me where this conflict arises. Nevertheless, this is guidance only and, in this case, I have found that the proposal complies with the development plan.

Conditions

14. In addition to the standard time limit condition, in the interests of certainty, I have included a condition specifying the approved plans. Given the proposed materials are indicated on the plans, an external materials condition is not necessary.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, having regard to the development plan as a whole, the Framework and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed, subject to conditions.

A James INSPECTOR