



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2025

by **C Rose BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/24/3353642

Tuckers Cottage, Watton Lane, Watton, 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 & Mrs G Copp against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/FUL/2024/01341.
 - The development proposed is New Dwelling (Amended Scheme).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During the course of the appeal, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. Whilst paragraph numbers have altered, any policies that are material to this decision have not fundamentally changed. I am satisfied that this has not prejudiced any party, and I have had regard to the latest version in reaching my decision.
3. At the time of my site visit the construction of the dwelling was considerably advanced and with the exception of the changes proposed as part of the appeal, appeared to accord with the submitted plans. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal based on those plans.
4. The description of development in the banner heading above has been taken from the application form as neither party has provided written confirmation that a revised description has been agreed.
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 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 with the Framework stating that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of AONB's (now called National Landscapes). 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 West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment (February 2009) (LCA) identifies the site as falling within the Brit Valley. This landscape is characterised by woodlands on rolling valley sides with large arable and grassland fields enclosed by trimmed hedgerows. The LCA 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. As identified in the previous appeal decision on the site¹ (the previous appeal), and as experienced at my site visit, 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. It is separated from nearby buildings by planting and by a track forming part of a Public Right of Way (PROW) that runs directly towards and alongside the appeal site. As a result, and given the position of the appeal site on open rising land, it has a closer visual association with the open land within the DNL than the nearby built form. This is particularly the case when viewed from the PROW that passes the site and when viewed from PROWs across the valley.
10. The development as part of this appeal seeks to retain the dwelling in its current position that remains in a slightly different position to the dwelling previously consented² and with a greater footprint, height and width, and larger basement with terrace above. However, in comparison to the building as constructed and the proposal the subject of the previous appeal, a reduction in the extent of the constructed two-storey rear projection is proposed such that part of the rear upper floor would be removed.
11. While the reduction in the size of the two-storey rear projection would reduce the bulk of the building slightly when viewed on approach from the west along the PROW, by reason of the remaining increased footprint, height, width and bulk of the building, and despite the removal of the previously consented chimney, the development would still retain a pronounced and overbearing appearance. As a result, it would visually dominate the immediate area and PROW, regardless of how many people use the PROW. This would be the case despite the site being screened from the majority of Watton Lane.
12. Furthermore, there are no changes proposed to the height, width or design of the front elevation. As a result, the building would retain its existing imposing effect on the wider landscape appearing over-scaled when viewed against the backdrop of the surrounding hillside.
13. It is recognised that the building consented on the site would have a degree of prominence due to its height, bulk and elevated position. However, it would remain lower, narrower, less deep with a smaller terrace, and have a smaller rear projection and less outdoor space. As such, by reason of the increased size, the proposed development would remain overly dominant and incongruous. As a result, it would be harmful to the character, special qualities and natural beauty of this part of the DNL having an unacceptable urbanising impact on the fringes of Bridport. This would be the case despite the presence of nearby buildings as they are generally of a smaller scale and/or less prominent in the landscape.

¹ APP/D1265/W/24/3337008

² WD/D/18/000204 and WD/D/19/001996

14. I have had regard to a single storey rear extension being permissible under permitted development rights, but this does not justify the increased footprint of the dwelling combined with its increased overall height and bulk. I have also had regard to the provision of planting close to the western boundary. Nonetheless, such planting would take time to establish, would not screen the dwelling in totality with the purpose of planting being to assimilate development into its surroundings rather than to provide screening. Any associated biodiversity improvements from the planting and development would be minimal.
15. Although I acknowledge that the extent of outdoor space has been reduced in comparison to the proposal the subject of the previous appeal decision, it remains larger than that originally approved. As such, likely associated paraphernalia and maintained residential appearance of the outdoor space extending up the hillside once completed, and in combination with the larger dwelling, would still provide an uncharacteristic and harmful extension of residential form further into the landscape. The enlarged plot would remain visible from the PROW passing the site and from the PROWs across the valley from which the introduction of an enlarged plot/outdoor space with associated paraphernalia and activity in combination with the larger dwelling 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.
16. While the enlarged plot would provide improved outdoor space for occupiers, this is partly necessary due to the enlarged footprint of the dwelling and the evidence before me does not to my mind clearly demonstrate that the approved outdoor space is inadequate to accommodate the needs of occupiers.
17. In conclusion, it therefore follows 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 state, 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

18. I have had regard to changes to the building being required due to the need to accommodate a ground floor staircase, enlarged utility and downstairs W/C, and to accommodate improved access around the building. However, these matters do not address or overcome the harm identified above. Moreover, in the absence of further justification, I am not convinced that such benefits could not be provided without the resultant increase in the size of the proposed dwelling and plot. As such I give these matters 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 conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole. Material considerations, including the Framework, individually or cumulatively, do not indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

C Rose

INSPECTOR