



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2025

by **C Shearing BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/25/3360666

Whitewood Oast, Swife Lane, Broad Oak, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8UR

- 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 Bonnano against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref is WD/2024/2339/F.
 - The development proposed is described as 'single storey rear extension, internal and external alterations and new front porch'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed rear extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its significance as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. Policy DC19 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 (the WLP) states that extensions to dwellings should normally be of an appropriate size and character relative to the original dwelling, and not visually dominate or otherwise adversely change the character of the existing building. The supporting text states that traditional buildings of rural character, including oasts, also warrant careful regard to their character. The Wealden Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2008 (the SPD) advises that proposed extensions should maintain or enhance the original character of the dwelling, including that they should be subordinate to the dwelling and be of a width no greater than half that of the existing dwelling.
4. The proposed extension would be a distinctly modern addition to the back of the house. Its design and appearance, including contemporary building materials and glazing, would not attempt to merge with or replicate the characteristics of the host building, but would instead allow the main building to remain visually distinct. Further details of the materials and finishes would be necessary if the appeal were otherwise allowed, however, I find the proposed design approach to be appropriate.
5. Nonetheless, the scale of the proposed extension would dominate the rear elevation of the building through occupying nearly the entire width of the main rear elevation and overlapping the flank wall of the existing rear utility addition. Furthermore, its depth would be comparable to that of the main house, nearly doubling its overall depth. It is not apparent how the retention of the original rear

walls, once internalised as a result of the extension, could reasonably be secured. For these reasons in combination the extension cannot be described as subordinate, or of an appropriate size to the original dwelling as described in the development plan and the proposal would conflict with Policy DC19 of the WLP and the SPD. In turn the proposal would also conflict with WLP Policy GD2 which requires development in this location to accord with specific policies in the Plan.

Heritage

6. The Council consider the building to be a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). Given the building's substantially intact architectural style, which reflects the landscape's agricultural heritage, it has some historic significance. This is apparent in views from the road and to a lesser extent in longer views from the valley to the rear, from where the building's significance is experienced within its rural setting. The building has clearly been subject to alterations in the past in association with its residential use, including some untraditional window replacements, a curved front bay and a small rear extension which is substantially glazed with plastic framing. Nonetheless given their scale, these alterations do not detract from nor substantially reduce the historic significance of the building when read as a whole. Based on the evidence and findings of my site visit, the building's significance is derived not only from the roundel and cowl, but also the building it is attached to.
7. In the absence of evidence to conflict these findings, I have therefore treated the existing building as a NDHA. While the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that only a minority of buildings have enough heritage significance to merit identification as a NDHA, this alone does not convince me that Whitewood Oast should not be treated as one.
8. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would cause harm to the significance of the NDHA through its width and depth and consequent dominance of the rear elevation. I find the level of harm to be moderate, given the position of the proposed extension. The proposal would therefore also conflict with Spatial Planning Objectives SPO1 and SPO2 of the Council's Core Strategy 2013 insofar as they relate to the District's distinct landscapes and historic environment, of which the site forms a part.

Balance

9. Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that, in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect NDHAs, a balanced judgement will be required, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
10. In terms of benefits, the proposal would provide open living space which the appellant considers the existing house is unable to provide. It has not been substantiated, however, that this is the only option to achieve this benefit and I give this limited weight.
11. The appellant has put forward a fall-back position which comprises a single storey rear extension which could be constructed without planning permission. A lawful development certificate confirms this and I have no reason to doubt that the appellant would otherwise implement that development if this appeal were to be dismissed. The fall-back scheme would entail an extension in a similar position but slightly narrower, providing separation to the rear utility extension and having a

lesser projection from the back of the building. Its overall depth would therefore be similar to that of the existing utility addition, and less than the depth of the main house. Although the maximum height of the fall-back scheme would be slightly higher than the appeal scheme, it would have a lower eaves level, broadly consistent with the existing utility. In combination these factors would result in the fall-back scheme being a less overbearing extension to the rear elevation. The design and materials of the fall-back scheme would have a more typically domestic appearance, being more solid and akin to a suburban setting which would be regrettable here and would conflict with the character of the existing house. Nonetheless, as a result of its dimensions and relationship to the utility projection, I find the fall-back position overall would have a less harmful effect on the character and appearance of the main building and its significance as an NDHA than the appeal scheme. Accordingly, it attracts limited weight as a consideration in favour of the appeal scheme.

12. For these reasons there are not material considerations of sufficient weight to outweigh the conflict with the development plan, or to justify the harm to the NDHA having regard to the test of paragraph 216 of the Framework.

Other Matters

13. The appellant has referenced extensions to other historic buildings, including oast houses, where the extensions are of varying scale and incorporate distinctly contemporary designs. However, I do not have full details of the circumstances under which they were granted or the reasons they were considered acceptable. As such I cannot be satisfied that their circumstances are the same as this appeal scheme.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are not material considerations of sufficient weight which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it.

C Shearing

INSPECTOR