



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 June 2025

by **O Tresise MSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/24/3357241

The Old Stables, Linchmere Common Road, Linchmere, West Sussex GU27 3NE

- 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 Knapp against the decision of the South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The Application Ref is SDNP/24/03733/HOUS.
 - The proposed development is described as: 'Single storey side extension following demolition of residential storage sheds, new bicycle shed'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appeal is accompanied by amended plans showing the removal of the entrance porch from the front elevation. These plans have not been subject to formal public consultation and the Authority have not had an opportunity to formally consider and comment on it. Given this, accepting the amended plans at this stage would be unfair or deprive those who should have been consulted the opportunity of such consultation. Therefore, having regard to the principles of Holborn¹, acceptance of the amended plans would be procedurally unfair and as a result I have not taken them into account in determining this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Linchmere Conservation Area and character and appearance of the host dwelling.

Reasons

4. The appeal site consists of a single storey detached residential property, siting within the Linchmere Conservation Area (LCA). Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 (the Act) requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
5. The Linchmere Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan December 2016 states that the special character of LCA is derived from the development of dispersed woodland settlement around historic common land and small pasture fields in a remote Wealden landscape. The historic integrity,

¹ Holborn Studios Ltd v The Council of the London Borough of Hackney [2017] EWHC 2823 (Admin)

enclosed and intimate character, architectural distinctiveness, and open space with mature trees and hedges make a positive contribution to the significance of the LCA as a whole. It goes on to state that the area is mostly residential and includes a number of historic and traditional buildings and structures.

6. The proposed extension would be single storey in height, and it would be situated in the same location as the existing timber buildings. However, it would be of a larger scale and mass. The previous Inspector² allowed the conversion of the original barn and buildings to a single dwelling at this site, and he considered that the glazed link was acceptable due to its subservient in scale and its ridgeline being lower than the adjoining roof. The appeal proposal before me shows that the ridge height of the proposed extension would be lower than that of the main building, however it would be taller than the ridge height of the glazed link building. Consequently, it would create a much more prominent feature in the area. Even though the existing hedges would somewhat soften the adverse effect, the proposed extension would be clearly discernible in the wider area and from within the site.
7. Additionally, the new building would have a gable roof to its side elevation, which would further detract from the established roof form of the host building. Furthermore, whilst I appreciate that some buildings in the area are finished with stonework, the use of stonework on the front elevation and the side elevation of the proposed extension would further undermine the existing lightweight appearance of the main building. The proposed front porch would also detract from the rural character of this converted residential property. As a result, the proposal would introduce a bulky and incongruous feature that would erode the simple and traditional rural vernacular character of the main building and the wider area.
8. The appellants suggest that the removal of the existing buildings would improve the appearance of the site, however, these buildings have a more rural appearance and better reflect the original use of the site.
9. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would harm the significance of the LCA. Therefore, the appeal proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or the appearance of the LCA as a whole. Due to the scale and nature of the proposed development, the harm to the heritage asset would be less than substantial.
10. The approach in paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to a heritage asset, as in this case, that harm should be balanced against the public benefits of the proposal.
11. In terms of public benefits there would be temporary economic benefits that would arise through the construction of the proposed extension and the outbuilding. The proposal would also incorporate bat access tiles and bat boxes that would enhance biodiversity value of the site. These benefits are however limited by the small scale of the scheme before me. While I appreciate that the proposal would provide accommodation with more living space, that would be a private benefit. The Framework indicates that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. I therefore find that the public benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the less than substantial harm identified, leading to conflict with the historic environment protection policies of the Framework.

² Appeal Decision APP/Y9507/W/19/3224462

12. Overall, the development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the LCA and would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling. It would conflict with Policies SD1, SD4, SD5, SD12, SD15 and SD31 of the South Downs Local Plan Adopted 2 July 2019 (2014-33). These seek for development, amongst other matters, to conserve the landscape, conserve and enhance landscape character, are of a sensitive and high quality design that makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area, conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, and respects the established character of the local area.

Other Matters

13. I note that the Authority raise no issues in respect of other matters, including, the principle of an extension, trees, woodlands, hedges, biodiversity, air quality, flood risk, living conditions, and dark night skies. The absence of harm in respect of these respects means they are neutral factors that weigh neither for nor against the development.
14. The appellants have drawn my attention to an appeal decision at Dormer Cottage, Linchmere³. However, I have limited information in relation to this development with regard to plans and reports. As such, I cannot be sure that it is directly comparable to the appeal proposal before me and as such carried limited weight. Furthermore, I am required to consider the appeal on its merits.

Conclusion

15. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

O Tresise

INSPECTOR

³ APP/Y9507/D/19/3234591