



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 March 2025 by N Manley BA (Hons) MSc

Decision by S Edwards BA MATCP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1605/D/25/3358852

Holly Blue House, London Road, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL54 4HG

- 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 Mrs Snowden against the decision of Cheltenham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01692/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as “Householder application for the addition of a first-floor extension.”
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. A new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024, after the determination of the planning application subject to this appeal. Whilst I have had regard to the revised national policy as a material consideration, planning decisions must still be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the issues most relevant to the appeal remain unaffected by the revisions to the Framework. I am therefore satisfied that there is no requirement to seek further submissions on the revised Framework, and that no party would be disadvantaged by such a course of action.
4. The site lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) which, prior to 2020, was known as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In accordance with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended), relevant authorities must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. I have considered the appeal on this basis. However, as the Framework refers to National Landscapes, this is the term I have generally used in my recommendation.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the CNL.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. Holly Blue House is positioned on the Cotswold Escarpment, which is identified by the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan (2023) (CNLMP) as a sensitive area, emphasising that the Escarpment and views to and from it are among the CNL's special qualities. The appeal property is a recently built, substantial detached dwelling within the CNL, featuring a modern design with a flat roof and elevations finished in coursed local stone and black vertical timber cladding.
7. The dwelling is adjacent to an open field crossed by electricity cables. The Cotswold Way National Trail, a public footpath, runs along the site's eastern boundary, lined with vegetation. During my visit, views through the vegetation and across the appeal site remained nevertheless possible from several vantage points, offering clear sightlines to the surrounding landscape. The proximity of the overflow channel connected to the nearby reservoir, whilst visible on the approach to the site from the south, does not alter the overriding rural character and its clear sense of tranquillity. This character can be particularly experienced by users of the Cotswold Way National Trail.
8. The proposal would lead to the creation of an additional storey which, despite being set back from the front and side (west) elevations, would significantly increase the height and bulk of the building. To the front of the site, the setback would ensure that, when standing relatively close to the dwelling, the visual impact of the development remains limited. However, from the Cotswold Way National Trail, the excessive height, bulk and massing resulting from the introduction of this additional storey would be highly perceptible, creating an unduly prominent built form, which would be harmful to the rural character of its surroundings and a landscape of high sensitivity. The development would be particularly detrimental to the experience of receptors using the National Trail, in proximity to the site.
9. Additionally, it is my view that the proposed finishing materials, as set out on the proposed plans, would accentuate the development's bulk, introducing a discordant element that would neither complement the existing building nor reflect the distinctive character of the CNL. As a result, it would appear visually intrusive and incongruous within its rural surroundings. Consequently, it would conflict with the CNLMP, which requires materials to respect local materials and building styles. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated how the development would conserve and enhance the CNL.
10. The appellant's submissions are supported by photographs, both in winter and summer views, though they are not all taken from the same viewpoints, thus making it difficult to establish meaningful comparisons. Although it has been suggested that the development would not be visible from locations immediately adjacent to the dwelling, and that boundary hedges provide effective screening even in winter, my observations on site revealed otherwise. With the hedgerows and vegetation not in full leaf, the dwelling remained clearly visible from multiple vantage points. As a result, I find that the boundary hedging would not sufficiently mitigate the harm caused by the proposed development, which would remain particularly noticeable from the adjacent public footpath for many months of the year, due to the deciduous nature of the vegetation.

11. The appellant suggests that a fence or wall up to a height of 2 metres could be erected along the boundary using permitted development rights, which would obscure views of the appeal dwelling and the proposed extension. However, given the area's topography, where several nearby public vantage points sit considerably higher than the appeal dwelling, there is no certainty that such a measure would be sufficiently effective in screening the development from the surrounding landscape.
12. My attention has been drawn to several appeal decisions related to proposals within the CNL. In the absence of further details regarding these particular schemes, I cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal, including in respect of scale, location, but also national and development plan policy and legislation. Certainly, they relate to different types of development to the proposal before me. Accordingly, I have given very limited weight to these decisions.
13. I acknowledge that the development would not place excessive demand on local infrastructure and services, and had regard to the fact that the proposal would provide additional accommodation and facilitate home working, reducing car journeys and contributing to the transition to a low-carbon economy. However, these are modest benefits, to which I ascribe limited weight. These benefits are outweighed by the harm that I have identified.
14. For the above reasons, the appeal proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and would not further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. As set out in paragraph 189 of the Framework, great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.
15. The appeal scheme therefore conflicts with the aims of Policies SD4 and SD7 of the GCTJCS, Policy D1 of the Cheltenham Plan (adopted 2020) and the CNLMP. Amongst other things, these require development to be of scale and use materials appropriate to the site and its setting, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the CNL, be consistent with the policies set out in the CNLMP, compliment and reflect the character of the landscape and not harm the setting of areas of acknowledged importance. Although it is accepted that Policy SD7 is not as restrictive as the Framework, this does not alter my view that the proposal would fail to conserve the natural beauty of the AONB, and thus conflicts with this Policy.
16. I however find no conflict with Policy L1 of the Cheltenham Plan, which primarily seeks to preserve the setting of Cheltenham and is therefore considered of limited relevance to this appeal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

17. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

N Manley

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

18. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's recommendation and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

S Edwards

INSPECTOR