



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2025

by Stewart Glassar BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/D/25/3368640

Pilgrims Garth, Pilgrims Way, Hollingbourne, Kent ME17 1UT

- 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 Terry Hussey against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/500662/FULL.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey side extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a two-storey side extension at Pilgrims Garth, Pilgrims Way, Hollingbourne, Kent ME17 1UT in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/500662/FULL, 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 drawings: Location Plan - 2025-880 (P) 001; Proposed Plans and Elevations - 2025-880 (P) 200.
 - 3) The external materials of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing dwelling.
 - 4) No development above slab level shall take place until details of a scheme for the enhancement of ecology on the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall consist of the enhancement of ecology through integrated methods into the fabric of the extension by means such as swift bricks, bat tubes and bee bricks, and through the provision within the application site of measures such as bird and bat boxes, bug hotels, log piles, planting which favours pollinators and hedgehog gaps/corridors. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the extension and all features shall be permanently retained and maintained thereafter. The details shall include sufficient information to assess the proposed measures including as necessary elevations, floorplans, block plans showing siting and specification/manufacturers details.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the Hollingbourne Upper Street Conservation Area and the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a two-storey detached dwelling which has been subject to previous extensions, and which has a number of curtilage outbuildings. It sits within a sizable, elevated plot that is adjacent to but outside of the Hollingbourne Upper Street Conservation Area (HUSCA).
4. There is no statutory protection for the setting of a conservation area, but the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that I identify and assess the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by development, including any contribution made by their setting.
5. The site is also located within the Kent Downs National Landscape (KDNL). The statutory purpose of a National Landscape is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The Framework provides that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes.

Conservation Area

6. The HUSCA is focussed on Upper Street, which appears to be an historic thoroughfare. It encompasses the various listed buildings on either side of the road as well as the spaces around them. Other period and listed buildings are included such that in places the HUSCA extends well beyond Upper Street itself. It seems to me that the special interest and significance of the HUSCA, is therefore in part derived from the aesthetic and architectural value of the mix of historic buildings as well as the attractive street scene which they create along Upper Street.
7. Given its elevated and set back position, Pilgrims Garth is visible from Pilgrims Way and the part of the HUSCA which extends along it. Many of the building's previous extensions are hidden from wider view but are evident when on site. The Council acknowledge that the previous extensions breach the guidelines in their Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). To my mind the original form of the dwelling has been lost as a result of these previous extensions but nonetheless the dwelling does not appear from Pilgrims Way to be overly large or conspicuous nor out of keeping with its rural location.
8. The proposed extension would give the dwelling a greater horizontal emphasis. The stepped ridge and set-in elevations would do little to distinguish the extension from the existing building. The extension would though be sited towards the site's northwestern boundary, ensuring a more discreet position and preserving the openness on the other side of the house towards the open countryside.
9. Whilst the development would not be strictly subservient, it would nonetheless appear suitably integral to the existing building as a whole when viewed from Pilgrims Way. It would be set back within the plot and the extensive boundary planting and fencing would help to ensure that the extension would not change the building's relationship with this part of the conservation area.
10. Similarly, it would not alter the appeal building's relationship with the Dirty Habit Inn, a Grade II listed building which contributes positively to the HUSCA. It is diagonally across the road from the appeal site and although there would be some intervisibility, this is principally when exiting the car park of the Dirty Habit. From this position the appeal building can already be seen but it would not be materially closer to the car park or highway as a result of the extension.

11. The appeal property would remain a more modern, detached building in an elevated position but in its extended form it would not appear unduly dominant in relation to the Dirty Habit or its setting and wider context along Pilgrims Way. I am also mindful that the mature trees along the boundary of the Dirty Habit's car park are within a conservation area so would require separate consent for works to lop or remove them.
12. Part of the existing property is visible from Upper Street. However, such views are fleeting when travelling along Upper Street and limited when at the junction with Pilgrims Way. For the most part the proposal would not generally be visible as it would be obscured by a combination of other buildings, trees and the boundary enclosures.
13. Overall, I find that the proposal would not harm the experience, appreciation and understanding of the significance of the Conservation Area. Consequently, the appeal proposal would preserve the setting of the HUSCA.

Landscape

14. The site is set within a typically undulating rural landscape of a pastoral character. This positively contributes to the scenic rural character and appearance of the countryside and the KDNL.
15. For the reasons set out above, I have not found the proposal to be harmful to the appearance of the existing building. The surrounding residential buildings while not being so overtly two storeys in height as the appeal property, comprise some sizable dwellings, particularly in terms of footprint. Similarly, there is variety in the appearance of these nearby buildings. The enlarged appeal building would not generally conflict with the varied styles of other houses in the immediate locality. I am also satisfied that it would not appear so much greater in scale than these neighbouring buildings. Consequently, the proposal would not appear obtrusive in this rural context.
16. Wider views of the building within the landscape would be limited. Where it could be seen, it would be in the context of an established residential plot, sited close to other buildings. Indeed, the extension would be sited closer to the neighbouring building, thereby avoiding a sense of the dwelling sprawling further out towards the countryside. Some larger houses in the countryside are not an unusual sight and overall, the proposal would not be so intrusive that it would spoil the landscape or visual qualities of the National Landscape.
17. The overall effect on the intrinsic character and scenic beauty of the KDNL would be acceptable and no harm would be caused to other important aspects of this designated area.

Findings

18. I have found no harm in terms of adverse impacts on the significance of the heritage asset and that the character and scenic beauty of the KDNL will be protected.
19. It might be considered that there is some conflict with Policy LPRHOU11 in that the proposal would not preserve the original form of the dwelling but to my mind it has already been lost as a result of the previous extensions. In that context, and when read as a whole, the proposal would accord with this policy as well as

Policies LPRSP9, LPRSP15 and LPRQD4 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2024 which, amongst other things, seek to ensure developments in the countryside and National Landscape are of a high quality and of sympathetic design that respond positively to the local and historic character of an area.

20. For similar reasons, I find the proposal to accord with Principles SD2, SD3, SD8, SD9 and LLC1 of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2021-2026 which, amongst other things, seek to conserve the character and qualities of the landscape and ensure development is appropriately designed so that it does not distract from them.
21. As I have found the proposal to accord with the development plan and to not have an overpowering or visually harmful impact on its rural surroundings, I am satisfied that the proposal would also accord with the SPD.

Other Matter

22. The Council has alluded to the nearby listed buildings albeit the effect of the proposal on them or their settings did not directly form part of the reasons for refusal. In view of the topography, intervening mature planting and separation distances involved, I find that the effect of the proposal on the setting of these heritage assets would be neutral.

Conditions

23. In addition to the standard time limit, a condition which lists the approved plans is necessary in the interests of certainty.
24. A condition ensuring the external finishes match those of the existing dwelling is necessary to protect the character and appearance of the building and wider area. The Local Plan requires ecological enhancements to be provided as part of new developments. Given the location of the appeal site a condition to this effect is reasonable and necessary.

Conclusion

25. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the specified conditions.

Stewart Glassar

INSPECTOR