



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 October 2025

by **C Coles MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/25/3372392

Oak Tree Cottage, High Street, Fletching, East Sussex TN22 3TD

- 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 J Rutherford against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref is WD/2025/0698/F.
 - The development proposed is erection of a single storey side extension, incorporating study, utility, ground floor WC and living room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of a single storey side extension, incorporating study, utility, ground floor WC and living room. at Oak Tree Cottage, High Street, Fletching, East Sussex TN22 3TD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref WD/2025/0698/F 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 external materials of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing dwelling.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos Block/Location Plan 2363/303 Rev A, Existing Elevations 2633/101, Proposed Gr Flr Plan 2363/300 Rev C, Proposed Elevations 2363/301 Rev C, Proposed Roof Plan 2363/302 Rev A, Existing Gr Flr Plan 2633/100.
 - 4) The extension shall be regarded and used as an integral part of the existing dwelling only and shall not be occupied as a separate dwelling unit, and not used for any trade or business purposes.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with specific reference to the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) and the Fletching and Splaynes Green Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. Oak Tree Cottage is one half of a two-storey pair of semi-detached dwellings and has previously been extended with a two-storey side extension. The properties were originally identical but both have subsequently been altered disrupting the appearance of uniformity between the dwellings. The appeal dwelling is one of four

post-war dwellings located on the eastern side of the High Street and within a countryside location and the CA and HWNL.

4. The front of the proposed extension would align with the front of the existing porch and the rear elevation of the proposal would align with the rear of the existing conservatory. The single storey height of the proposal would appear subservient to the two-storey dwelling and would be constructed of matching materials. Although the proposed windows would be of a different design to the existing, the scale of the windows would be proportionate to the extension.
5. The simple hipped roof design of the proposed extension would follow the hip of the main dwelling and would be constructed of matching tiles to visually complement the main dwelling. The hipped roof would ensure the proposal would not appear overly dominant. Whilst it is noted the side elevation would be longer than the side elevation of the main dwelling, the hipped roof reduces the bulk and mass which is also broken up by two rooflights. The side elevation would not be visible from the wider public realm and the property to the north is a substantial distance from the proposal and would be screened by a 2m high close boarded fence and mature boundary screening.
6. S72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
7. There is no Conservation Area Character Appraisal of Fletching and Splaynes Green Conservation Area and the Council have not drawn any specific attributes of the CA to my attention. Therefore, my assessment of the proposal on the significance of the CA is based on my observations on site.
8. The heritage significance of the CA is formed from an attractive mix of dwellings set along a traditional rural high street lined with several listed buildings.
9. Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) places a duty on relevant authorities to further the statutory purpose of the National Landscape. Policy EN6 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 (WLP) seeks to both conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the HWNL.
10. The natural beauty of the HWNL is derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character. However, the HWNL is particularly vulnerable to development which fails to respect local distinctiveness in terms of materials, detailing and relationship to neighbouring buildings.
11. The subservient height and scale of the proposal in relation to the existing dwelling, its position on the site, good boundary screening to the street scene and the use of complimentary materials to the existing dwelling would ensure the proposal would not harm the significance of the heritage asset and would preserve the character and appearance of the CA and would align with the purposes of the LURA.
12. For the reasons outlined above, the proposed extension would have no significant effect on the character and appearance of the area, with specific reference to the

HWNL and the CA. The proposal would comply with Policies DC19, HG10, EN27, EN19 and EN6 of the WLP, Spatial Objectives SPO2, SPO13 and Policy WCS14 of the adopted Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013. Together these policies seek to permit development where the scale, style, design and materials are appropriate and sympathetic to the existing dwelling (amongst other considerations). The policies also seek to ensure the historic environment and natural beauty and character of the landscape is protected.

Other Matters

13. My attention has been drawn to nearby listed buildings, the Grade II Listed Atheralls Farm and the Grade II Listed 3 and 4 Corn Poor Cottages and 1 to 4 Robins Cross. Atheralls Farm is separated from the appeal site by a 2m high close boarded fence and there is no intervisibility between the appeal site and Atheralls Farm house. 3 and 4 Corn Poor Cottages and 1 to 4 Robins Cross are on the opposite side of the road to the appeal site and separated by boundary screening at the appeal site. The significance of the listed buildings would remain interpretable from within the street scene and their significance would be preserved. The distance between the site and the listed buildings is such that the proposed development would not adversely affect the significance of the buildings as heritage assets or the manner in which they are experienced in accordance with Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. I note the Council has not raised any concerns over the effect on the settings of the listed buildings and I have no reason to take a different view.
14. Through the addition of residential development, proposals within the Zone of Influence of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) have the potential to increase recreational pressure on these protected sites. Recreational use of the SPA and SAC can result in damage to habitats through trampling, erosion, and disturbance to ground nesting birds. The Council holds evidence of this through visitor studies.
15. However, in this instance, the proposal is for a single-storey side extension to an existing dwelling and will not result in a net increase in residential units or population. As such, it would not contribute to increased recreational pressure or otherwise have a likely significant effect on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest SPA or SAC.

Conditions

16. For the avoidance of doubt, conditions relating to the time frame for implementation of the permission, the plans and materials have been imposed.
17. To protect the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties, a condition is required restricting the use of the proposal to an integral part of the existing dwelling.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

C Coles

INSPECTOR