



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2025

by **S F Barnes MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/25/3371484

New Barn Farm, Stunts Green, East Sussex BN27 4PL

- 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 Robins against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref is WD/2025/0728/F.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as: "Amendments to WD/2023/1337/F comprising addition of open porch to front door, dormer windows to bedrooms 3 and 4 and erection of boiler room."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council has previously granted planning permission on the site for an alternative proposal, under Ref WD/2023/1337/F. I have been provided with the details of this case. This permission is extant. The details set out within the officer's report make clear that the most significant difference between the two cases is the inclusion of a further extension to the existing building (boiler room) and the introduction of dormer windows. In addition, an open porch is proposed.
3. The site is within the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL), the statutory purpose of the making of such designations is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of such an area. I am mindful of my duty to seek to further those purposes as set out under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended).

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area, with particular regard to the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a dwelling formed following the historic conversion of a pair of single-storey barn buildings. These are set within the pastoral farmland scenery of large open fields, established hedgerow and, beyond those buildings, lines of trees. Development in the immediate surroundings includes modern, portal-framed barns and a row of detached dwellings which front the Lane and adjoin the appeal site's access track. The dwelling is prominent in views from West End from where it is seen to occupy an elevated position. Its scale, uninterrupted hipped roof form and use of vernacular materials retains a rustic, barn-like

appearance. This is inherently consistent with the rural character of the area and contributes, albeit in a small way, to the qualities of the landscape character of the HWNL.

6. The proposed boiler room extension, with its flat roof and low height, would be of limited mass and treated in matching materials. Whilst I appreciate the Council's desire to maintain a simplistic, traditional plan-form of the building, given its positioning, this addition would be broadly out of view from any significant public vantage points. It would also maintain a rustic, utilitarian character. Likewise, the proposed open porch would be sited within the internal 'courtyard' and so generally out of view from public vantage points. The characterful catslide slope of the extension would remain the dominant feature on this elevation, despite the modest consequential change to the roof form brought about by this addition.
7. Even where visible from outside of the site, these elements would be of an appropriate size and have a sympathetic appearance. It follows that these would not detract from the form and character of the building and would thus have a neutral effect on the contribution the dwelling makes to its surroundings and wider landscape.
8. As regards the proposed dormer windows, I did observe that such features exist on some dwellings in the vicinity. However, those are generally historic features of conventional houses or later additions. I did not identify any examples of dormer windows on traditional agricultural buildings within or in views from the appeal site. There is nothing before me to suggest that dormer windows are a distinctive feature of such buildings locally. As the Council points out, the scale of extension proposed in the 2024 scheme was acceptable in part because they would retain a traditional barn-style character and appearance. Introducing dormer windows would sharply contrast with this, adding an overtly domestic feature that undermines the building's rural character.
9. Moreover, the design of the proposed dormer windows would dominate this prominent roofscape due to their scale and position. This would be the case irrespective of the use of traditional materials. My attention has also been drawn to the Wealden Design Guide (2008). Although there is a degree of compliance with the detailed design requirements of this document in respect of dormer windows, the document also sets out many principles of good design in respect of the treatment of rural buildings. In particular, reference is made to the importance of exercising caution when considering the introduction of new features such as new openings and the addition of non-traditional glazed features. It also sets out that proposals for dormer windows are unlikely to receive support without detailed evidence of their previous use on the building. This has not been demonstrated here.
10. It has been put to me that the dormer windows would have a limited impact on the building and its surrounds given the intervening distance from West End. However, as I have noted above, the elevated position of the building means that the building is clearly visible from a range of vantage points along West End. Due to their siting, the proposed dormer windows would be significant and detracting features in those views. I have no substantive evidence before me demonstrating that they would not be visible more widely across the HWNL in longer-distance views, particularly given that surrounding land levels undulate.

11. Although I find the boiler room extension and porch acceptable in their effect on the host building and its surroundings, the proposed dormer windows would cause harm. In respect of the harm on the landscape character of the HWNL, I find that this could reasonably be described as limited. Nevertheless, Paragraph 189 of the Framework directs that great weight is to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes. Likewise, the statutory duty is to seek to conserve and enhance such areas, which is a high threshold.
12. Overall, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area, with particular regard to the landscape and scenic beauty of the HWNL. The proposal would therefore conflict with the relevant provisions of saved Policies EN6, EN27, DC19 and HG10 of the Wealden Local Plan (1998), Policies SPO1 and SPO13 of the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan (2013), and Policies 1 and 12 of the Herstmonceux Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2017 – 2027 (2019). These policies, in summary, seek to conserve and enhance the HWNL and its traditional building styles, to ensure that proposals respect local character and that extensions do not dominate or adversely change the character of the existing building.
13. The Council's Decision Notice also refers to Policy GD2 of the Local Plan, which seeks to control development outside of specified boundaries, and to Policy WCS14 of the Core Strategy, which relates to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. However, I identified no conflict with those policies in respect of the main issue.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and I have not identified any material considerations which outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

S F Barnes

INSPECTOR