



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 November 2025

by **N Perrins MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/E3335/W/25/3372402

Rose Cottage, Stawell Road, Stawell, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 9AA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs David Bearman against Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref is 46/24/00009.
 - The application sought planning permission for the change of use of building from bed and breakfast and craft studio into a dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are (i) whether the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for occupiers regarding outlook and daylight, (ii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of Rose Cottage, and (iii) whether the proposal would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Living conditions for future occupiers

3. The appeal property is a detached single storey building in use as a bed and breakfast accommodation and craft studio ancillary to the adjacent property, Rose Cottage. The appeal property is divided internally into the bed and breakfast and craft studio with both elements accessed from a separate door from the rear garden area. There is an existing driveway in between Rose Cottage and the appeal property.
4. The proposal seeks to change the use of the appeal property to provide a 1-bedroom dwelling. Main access to the dwelling would be through the existing door that currently serves the bed and breakfast accommodation. This would lead into a newly created hall from which the bedroom, shower / wc and living area would be accessed. The door serving the craft studio would be changed to a window.
5. The building has limited wall height due to its design including roof structure. This means that the only existing openings that could provide outlook are located on the rear elevation's central gable. The remainder of the accommodation relies entirely on rooflights. While the rooflights provide good daylight, they do not offer a meaningful outlook, which is an important component of residential amenity.

6. Consequently, the proposed window and rear door openings would offer only a constrained and enclosed aspect and outlook from the hall and living space. The creation of the hall would then mean that the bedroom would for all intents and purposes have virtually no outlook at all. I recognise the constraints that exist with the design of the structure, but this is not a reason to forgo achieving sufficient outlook for future occupiers. The layout and lack of suitably sized proposed openings in this case would result in a very limited outlook and create an unacceptably oppressive environment for future occupiers living in what is proposed to be a permanent residential use of the building.
7. I also acknowledge the dwelling would be served by an external amenity area as well as sufficient levels of daylight through the rooflights and other openings. However, these aspects would be required for any residential development and do not overcome or justify the deficiencies identified regarding the lack of outlook for future occupiers.
8. To conclude, the lack of any meaningful outlook for future occupiers would provide a constrained and poor standard of accommodation for permanent residential living. This is contrary to the requirements of Policies D2 and D25 of the Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011-2032 (SLP), which require development to provide high-quality design that would not unacceptably impact upon the residential amenity of future occupants. The proposal also conflicts with Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that requires development to have a high standard of amenity for future occupiers.

Effect on the Occupiers of Rose Cottage

9. The parking for the proposed dwelling would be provided by the existing parking area located in between the appeal property and adjacent Rose Cottage. The proposal includes the removal of the porch over the entrance to Rose Cottage to increase the area available for access to the appeal building by around 1.2m. Even with this, the Council contend that occupants of the appeal property would need to directly pass the ground floor windows of Rose Cottage to access the appeal property. The appellant refutes this and states there would be a footpath to Rose Cottage and separate access to the appeal dwelling via the driveway. However, this is not clearly articulated on the plans to demonstrate that these areas would be kept suitably separate and movements away from Rose Cottage as is alleged. Nor is any boundary treatment proposed that could clearly separate the dwellings and help address the privacy concerns raised.
10. While this area is used in associated with the existing use, it currently is all part of a single and connected use of the site. The proposed dwelling would introduce a new, independent residential planning unit with its own pattern of daily comings and goings. Unlike the existing arrangement, these movements would not have any link to the occupants of Rose Cottage. The proximity of the access and lack of any separation would give rise to an unusually close relationship between the properties that would be likely to cause noise, disturbance, and loss of privacy for the occupants of Rose Cottage.
11. I observed on my site inspection that the windows along Rose Cottage's eastern elevation do not currently serve primary habitable accommodation, which is mainly located on the other side of the dwelling. However, these rooms are still part of the living area of the dwelling from which the close access arrangements for the

proposed adjacent dwelling would remain unacceptably apparent based on the plans provided.

12. I have also considered the appellant's evidence on tight spatial arrangements being a characteristic of the area. However, the examples at Crendge Lane, Pound Studio and The Old Apple Store have access roads passing dwellings as opposed to parking and where movements would be more transient than is proposed here. The examples provided at Manderlay and Meadowside and Hedgehogs and Cape House include boundary treatment to provide clear separation, which assists in safeguarding privacy and amenity between those properties. The examples provided, therefore, are not directly comparable to what is proposed in this case and do not justify the harm identified.
13. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of Rose Cottage contrary to Policies D2 and D25 of the SLP and Paragraph 135 of the Framework.

Highway Safety

14. The proposal does not include a turning area meaning that parked vehicles would need to reverse out onto a classified road. I note this is contrary to standing advice provided by the Highway Authority. In response, the appellant has submitted a Transport and Highways Report by a qualified highways engineer. I find that this provides a credible analysis of the road conditions, visibility, safety records and the planning history associated with the access.
15. I also observed on my site inspection that Stawell Road has limited levels of traffic given its rural location and speeds are low. I have no reason to believe this was an untypical reflection of the general traffic conditions on the road. I also acknowledge that the parking area subject of this appeal has historically been used for commercial uses from the former cattery and currently with the bed and breakfast both of which would require cars to reverse out from the parking area as is proposed here. I further note that the appellant's evidence on safety records indicate there have been no reported incidents in the area for many years, even with some properties such as the appeal site requiring cars to reverse out.
16. The information before me, therefore, demonstrates that the access arrangement at the site has been in place for many years without having caused any issues with highway safety. The existing bed and breakfast and craft studio use would likely have similar levels of traffic movements to the proposal and thereby provides a fallback position to which I give weight in this decision. There is also no objective evidence before me that demonstrates the proposed use would intensify traffic or create a new highway safety issue over and above how the access is already used.
17. In conclusion and for the reasons stated, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety over and above the existing arrangements. The proposal therefore does not materially conflict with Policy D14 of the SLP and the relevant provisions of the NPPF. However, finding no harm in this regard does not overcome the harm to living conditions identified earlier in this decision.

Other matters

18. I have considered the representations submitted in support and in objection to the proposal. However, as I have found the appeal to be unacceptable for clear

reasons relating to living conditions sufficient to dismiss the appeal, I do not need to consider these further in this decision.

19. I also note the Council are concerned that the absence of any street-facing windows or conventional frontage would result in a dwelling with no relationship to the public realm, albeit did include this in their reasons for refusal. As the building already exists in the village street scape and would not be materially changed in visual terms, I agree that the lack of street facing frontage is not a reason of itself to justify refusal of planning permission.
20. I also acknowledge the appellant's concern over the accuracy of parts of the Council's statement including planning history as well as the lack of a site visit and opportunity to discuss amendments during the application. However, these aspects are not determinative to the outcome of this appeal, which I have assessed based on the planning merits of the proposal as set out in this decision.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above and taking account of the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

N Perrins

INSPECTOR