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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2026

**by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026

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**Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/25/3375044**

**Gillridge Farm Oast, Gillridge Lane, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1UR**

- 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 Ms Selina Trueman against the decision of Wealden District Council.
  - The application Ref is WD/2025/0303/F.
  - The development proposed is erection of garage and storage building.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including the High Weald National Landscape (the NL) and a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) at Gillridge Farm Oast.

### Reasons

3. The appeal site is in rural countryside north of Crowborough. It is a residential property, with a group of buildings arranged in tight configuration around a central courtyard (the cluster). The supplied heritage statement details the history of the site; Notwithstanding alterations to the buildings, the essential form of the cluster has remained much the same since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
4. The site is in the NL. As such, Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) requires me to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the NL. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that I give great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in NLs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.
5. The Planning Practice Guidance sets out the relevance of management plans for NLs; Whilst not part of the development plan, they help set out the strategic context for development and provide evidence of the value and special qualities of these areas. The High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-29) (the NLMP) is therefore a material consideration.
6. The NLMP lists the core character components of the NL's natural beauty as including, in respect of settlements, a high density of historic farmsteads typically arranged around routeways. Loose courtyard plan-types are common, and dispersed plan-types are particularly characteristic. These descriptions may

reasonably be applied to the cluster, and the site contributes positively to the NL in that respect.

7. The site includes an NDHA in the form of a connected oast house and associated cottage. The heritage statement details the alterations to the NDHA over time, but it nevertheless remains readily identifiable as a traditional oast house. In retaining its essential form, including as part of the cluster, it gives a clear indication as to the history of the site and the area. For the purposes of the appeal, this is the significance of the NDHA.
8. The proposal is to erect a detached domestic garage outbuilding to provide cover for motor vehicles and storage. In terms of design, it would incorporate an exposed oak frame and an asymmetrical pitched roof made with red clay tiles, giving it a broadly traditional appearance. The Council has no issue with this aspect of the proposal, and I see no reason to take a different view.
9. The garage would be placed closer to the site entrance than to the NDHA, in a position where it would appear distinctly separate from the cluster. Compared to other dispersed features found across the site such as a tennis court, the access track, and an informal parking area, the garage would be more impactful as it possesses a far greater degree of height and bulk. Though it would not be a large building, it would nevertheless be so noticeably at odds with the established pattern of development that it would alter the character of the site.
10. Regarding whether that alteration would be harmful; Objective S3 of the NLMP is to conserve the distinct built heritage of the High Weald, and one of the cited issues facing the NL is the erosion of its character through the cumulative effects of suburbanisation, including the residential fragmentation of farmsteads, the extension of residential curtilage boundaries, and additional annexes and outbuildings.
11. There are already parking bays where the garage would be built. They are somewhat informal, but the surface appears durable. It appears that vehicles may park there regardless of my decision. Even so, the garage would be far more noticeable than the existing bays which, given their openness and informality, appear part of the largely open ground around the cluster. The garage would formalise the area as a functional part of the residential curtilage, both spreading residential development outwards, and challenging the cluster for visual primacy.
12. In so doing, it would not only conflict with Objective S3, but also embody a form of development cited as harmful to the NL. For the same reasons, the proposal would also undermine the significance of the NDHA, and harm the character and appearance of the area.
13. I recognise that the proposed garage would be positioned near mature trees and other greenery, including a tall, dense boundary hedge along the roadside. This would limit direct views of the garage, particularly from outside the site, and assist in softening the impact of its presence. Even so, the garage would represent a sufficiently marked departure from the established pattern of development as to catch the eye, particularly upon entering the site. Moreover, I have little assurance that any of the greenery will remain in place in the longer term.

14. The garage would permit cars to be parked under cover. Whilst that may be beneficial or desirable for the appellant, I have little reason to view it as essential. As such, it carries little weight against the harms identified above.
15. I am informed that the garage would meet the appellant's need to store equipment associated with the maintenance of the land. However, other than a reference to the size of the site, which I accept may be too large for standard domestic mowers and suchlike, I have little before me to explain what equipment is needed and for what purpose. Moreover, the site appeared in very good order when I visited, and I have little to explain why existing maintenance arrangements are insufficient. It is not evident therefore that storage for equipment is essential.
16. Following on from the above, I note the proposed location for the garage has been selected in preference to other parts of the site, and the reasons those alternative locations were discounted. Even if I accept the appellant's position, however, it carries little weight in my determination as the essential need for the garage has not been demonstrated.
17. The proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the High Weald National Landscape and a non-designated heritage asset, Gillridge Farm Oast. As such, it conflicts with Saved Policies DC19 and EN6, of the adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998 and Policies SPO2 and SPO13 of the Core Strategy 2013, where they require development to not adversely change the character of an existing group of buildings, that it preserve or enhance the NL, and protect the historic environment. The proposal would not conserve or enhance landscape and scenic beauty in the NL, and would not further the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the NL.

### **Conclusion**

18. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.
19. The appeal is dismissed.

*A Knight*

INSPECTOR