



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2026

by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/25/3375852

Rotherhurst Bungalow, Cottage Hill, Rotherfield, East Sussex TN6 3JJ

- 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 Damion Thompson against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref is WD/2025/2085/F.
 - The development proposed is erection of garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Permission was previously granted¹ for the erection of a garage in the northwesternmost corner of the appeal site (the approved garage). A different building has been built instead (the unauthorised building) and is the subject of an as-yet undetermined appeal against an enforcement notice. Given the characteristics of the appeal proposal as I have set out below, my determination would not be altered by either the retention or removal of the unauthorised building.
3. A raised platform exists at the appeal site in approximately the position where it is proposed to erect the appeal scheme garage. The creation of that platform, including any raising and retaining of land beneath it, is not evidently part of the proposal before me. I therefore proceed to assess the merits of the proposed garage in isolation, though I refer to the platform as appropriate hereafter.

Main Issue

4. 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).

Reasons

5. The appeal site includes a semidetached dwelling along with its curtilage. The land rises upwards such that the northern end of the site is on higher ground than the dwelling. At this northern end is found a vehicular access from Cottage Hill through a set of double gates, leading to a hardsurfaced area. The unauthorised building is on the western side of this area; the proposed garage would be to the south of it. The site is in the countryside, both in the sense of being beyond the development boundary for Rotherfield, and in that it is part of sporadic development in what is otherwise a landscape of trees and fields.

¹ Application Ref. WD/2019/0777/F

6. The site is in the NL. 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.
7. 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.
8. The NLMP lists the core character components of the NL's natural beauty as including, in respect of settlements, hamlets occurring around the junction of routeways. The area around the appeal site may reasonably be described in this way, particularly as Cottage Hill is recognised as a historic routeway. Though it has been extended over time, the dwelling is nevertheless modest in size and traditional in appearance. A reasonable sense of openness is found across the garden area; this both fits in with, and contributes to, the largely undeveloped and rural nature of the area. Given these characteristics, the site contributes positively to the NL.
9. The proposed garage would be irregular in shape, single storey, and with a crown roof. It would present its longest continuous elevation towards the appeal site garden, and its next longest to the road. It would be finished in cladding timber and clay tiles, with areas of glazing across the south and north elevations.
10. The appeal site has a reasonably generous garden, but at some 63m² the proposed garage would nevertheless be so large as to absorb a significant portion of it. Its elevated level, resulting from both the slope of the land and the retaining structure, would make it highly prominent from the garden, the dwelling, and from the road, which it would be placed close to and be visible from in glimpses. The use of glazing, uncharacteristic for a domestic garage and store, would further catch the eye.
11. The proposed garage would occupy much of the width of the site, segregating its northern end into something of a separate element based around the existing hardsurface. This would notably reduce the openness of the site. That the proposed garage would have this effect would further emphasise its presence. Overall, it would overwhelm the garden and dominate the site, giving it a harmfully more developed appearance and feel.
12. The NLMP states that one of the recognised issues facing the NL is the erosion of its character through the cumulative effects of suburbanisation, including additional annexes and outbuildings. Given the effects of the proposed garage as described above, it would embody a form of development cited as harmful to the NL.
13. Though I am informed that the proposed garage would be similar in size to outbuildings commonly seen in the locality, no specific examples have been provided. I can therefore attribute little weight to this and have instead based my assessment of the character of the area on what I was able to see during my visit.

14. I recognise that the approved garage, which would have had a footprint of some 54m² and a height of 5m, was found acceptable by the Council. However, the approved garage would not have been so prominently located within the site. It would have maintained openness to a greater degree, including by way of its greater distance to the dwelling, and would not have separated the northern end of the site. It would also have been a less conspicuous, more traditional, rural-looking building, as it did not incorporate any glazing and was open sided. The effects of the approved garage are not as harmful as those of the appeal scheme, and so carries little weight in my determination.
15. The proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the High Weald National Landscape. It therefore conflicts with Policies DC19, EN6 and EN27 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998, and with Policies SPO1 and SPO13 of the Wealden Core Strategy 2013 where they require that development not harm landscape setting and rural character, that it preserve or enhance the NL, and that it respect existing character. 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.
16. Local Plan Policy HG10 pertains to proposals within the development boundary, and has no evident relevance to the appeal, therefore.

Conclusion

17. 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.
18. The appeal is dismissed.

A Knight

INSPECTOR