



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2025 by J Kirkaldy BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

Decision by M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/D/25/3366239

Stream View, Golford Road, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 3NT

- 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 David Pearson against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00232/FULL.
 - The development proposed is for an extension to the western flank elevation of the existing detached annexe outbuilding and proposed rear dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Council adopted the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (LP) on the 10 December 2025. The policies in the new Local Plan supersede all of the saved policies from the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2006 and the Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2010, which are referred to in the Council's reasons for refusal. I have taken into account the appellant's comments received in respect of the new LP policies. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the development plan (LP).
4. In November 2023, all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) in England and Wales became 'National Landscapes'. However, the legal designation and policy status remain the same. I have referred to the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) throughout my decision.
5. The building subject to the appeal is referred to as 'Blessings' in some of the submission documents. For the avoidance of doubt, I have referred to it as the 'annexe'.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are a) whether the proposed level of accommodation is appropriate for an annexe and/or whether it would result in a separate unit capable of independent occupation, and b) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling having regard to its location in the HWNL.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Annexe or Dwelling

7. The appeal site is situated within a former farmstead, comprising of an oast, farmhouse and barn which have been subdivided into several separate residential properties. 'Stream View', situated in a discreet set back position, was constructed in the 1980's, replacing the former farm managers dwelling. The former double garage associated with the property, was converted into an annexe (subject to this appeal) in 2005 (ref 04/02012/FUL).
8. The annexe is situated to the front and approximately 7 metres from the main dwelling, on the opposite side of the driveway. The accommodation currently provides a kitchen/living area, bathroom and bedroom on the ground floor, and a gallery area lit by a roof light at first floor. To the rear of the annexe is a patio with unrestricted access into a large paddock which is separated from the main dwelling by hedging.
9. The extended accommodation would provide a separate kitchen, study, living room, cloakroom and a bedroom and ensuite at first floor level. Policy H11 of the LP requires proposals for annexes to be ancillary to the main dwelling in terms of use and scale, and that they shall not be used for separate occupation or be capable of being sold separately.
10. It is clear from the submitted plans that the proposal would represent a large extension to the existing annexe, falling just short of doubling the existing floor area with a corresponding increase in scale and volume. I am not satisfied that the extended annexe would remain subordinate to the host dwelling given its scale, position forward of the front elevation and its appearance as a standalone dwelling.
11. The appellant indicates that the annexe is intended to remain ancillary to the host dwelling once extended. However, the test in Policy H11 is not concerned with intention but whether, by its design and layout, the resultant building would lend itself to future occupation as a separate dwelling.
12. There is no information before me as to how the annexe has been occupied in conjunction with the host dwelling. Although the annexe was furnished, it did not appear to be occupied at the time of my site visit, due to the storage of domestic paraphernalia. The annexe appears to have its own name - 'Blessings,' and its own car parking area and patio.
13. Irrespective of the above, the proposed extension would result in a much larger annexe. The proposed plans indicate a much more spacious level of accommodation than exists at present, which would allow the occupants comfortable accommodation to enable independent living. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that the intended occupier would rely on any services or facilities of the host dwelling including things like shared utilities and a postal address. Neither is there any apparent explanation of what relationship, if any, there would be between the occupants of the annexe and the host dwelling.
14. The driveway and car parking area for the annexe appears to have been shared with the main dwelling. However, I acknowledge that planning permission has recently been granted for a large garage building to serve the host dwelling further

away on the opposite side of the annexe. The appellant suggests that the annexe would retain parking on the driveway located between it and the host dwelling.

15. A spur road has been created off the main access track between the driveway to the host dwelling and the newly constructed garage, presently used for access to the paddock. It is not clear whether this has the benefit of planning permission. Nonetheless, the plans clearly indicate that it would be extended, creating a dedicated driveway and parking area to the rear of the annexe. The proposed floor plan indicates the primary entrance to the annexe would be on the front elevation, closest to the main dwelling. However, the proposal also includes an external door adjacent to the proposed car parking area which would be more practical to use as the main point of access. The annexe would also retain a separate garden terrace and access to the rear paddock which appears physically and visually linked to it, rather than the main dwelling, due to the intervening hedgerow.
16. It seems to me with no compelling evidence to the contrary, that the resultant building would be read and used as a distinct dwelling, with a separate vehicular access, parking and amenity space. Its scale and use would prevent it from being reasonably considered an incidental building to the host dwelling.
17. The appellant seeks to address the issue of interdependence through the imposition of a restrictive condition. However, as the scale, layout and level of accommodation proposed would allow the building to be occupied independently and would readily lend itself to being subdivided or sold off in future, I find that a planning condition would not be reasonable or enforceable. It would therefore fail to meet all of the 6 tests of conditions¹. I acknowledge that my findings differ from the Inspector in relation to the garage approval. However, in that case, there was no suggestion in the plans that the proposal would provide accommodation that was capable of being occupied as an independent dwelling. The specific circumstances of this proposal are therefore considerably different.
18. Despite the description of development, I cannot be satisfied on the evidence before me that the extended annexe would be used as additional accommodation, or that its use would be part and parcel of the main dwellinghouse. The proposal would result in a separate unit capable of independent occupation. Therefore, it would conflict with Policy H11 of the LP as set out above.

Character and Appearance

19. The primary purpose of the designation of the HWNL is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty². In performing functions that affect land in National Landscapes (NL) decision-makers must 'seek to further' the purposes for which these areas are designated³. In addition to this statutory duty, the Framework requires great weight be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in NL. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) refers to management plans for NL as relevant for assessing planning applications. The High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-2029) (the Management Plan) is a material consideration.
20. The natural beauty of the HWNL is derived from its rural and small-scale character of ridges and valleys, with intricate mosaics of small fields interspersed with

¹ As required by paragraph 57 of the Framework

² As set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

³ Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended by section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023).

farmsteads surrounded by hedges and woods, arranged around a network of historic routeways. The appeal site comprises a dwelling, outbuildings, a domestic garden and large paddock. It forms part of an enclave of residences that once formed a loose knit historic farm steading, typical of the HWNL. The scattered arrangement of buildings, large plots, presence of mature planting and proximity to paddocks and the adjacent pastoral landscape, mean that the location is characteristically rural. As a small annexe to the main dwelling, the appeal building contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area. The appeal site and the land associated with it directly contributes to the attractive pastoral qualities of the HWNL.

21. The Management Plan identifies the cumulative suburbanisation of the countryside, including through the enlargement of annexes and outbuildings and hard surfacing, as a key pressure affecting the area's character. Policy H11 of the LP states that extensions to an existing dwelling or additional ancillary buildings will only be permitted, amongst other criteria, where it would be compatible with the character and appearance of the main dwelling and its setting in terms of design, siting, layout, mass, height and form.
22. The existing annexe is a modest single-storey structure. While it sits close to the host dwelling, it reads clearly as a subsidiary and subordinate building within the wider cluster of converted farmstead buildings. Its limited footprint and simple form contribute to this relationship. The existing building has an overtly domestic appearance, and this would continue through in the design of the proposed extension. In this regard, the proposal would differ from the recent garage building, which has been designed to echo vernacular agricultural architecture incorporating a half-hipped roof and barn style doors.
23. As the extension would not be set in from the existing elevations or set down from the ridge of the roof, it would not appear particularly subordinate to the original annexe. The additional width, depth and increased massing would give the resultant annexe a far greater visual presence than is currently the case. The insertion of a large box-type dormer window at roof level would add to this sense of increased scale and domesticity.
24. As discussed above, the enlarged annexe with extended access and car parking area would assume the appearance of a separate dwelling, visually and functionally separate to Stream View. Despite the use of matching materials, the development would erode the clear hierarchy between the host dwelling and its ancillary buildings resulting in a much more prominent structure.
25. Although not overtly visible, it would nonetheless be visible from the access track off the main road and in views from neighbouring dwellings. The proposed extension would be visible in more limited views from the nearby public right of way, albeit beyond the existing annexe form. It would have a clear urbanising and encroaching effect when read in the cumulative context of the newly constructed garage building, eroding the separation gap and area of paddock between the buildings.
26. The proposed development would therefore contribute to a spread and intensification of domestic structures and built form in the rural landscape, which in this case would be tantamount to the creation of a new dwelling in the countryside. It would fail to conserve the sporadic pattern and scale of built form that contributes

positively to the landscape character of this part of the High Weald. It would also erode the compositional quality of the loose knit former farmstead, a concern I note is shared by interested parties. Although the visual impacts would be localised, the proposal would not seek to further the purposes of the HWNL, namely being to simultaneously conserve *and* enhance its natural beauty.

27. Drawing these matters together, I find that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, having regard to its location in the HWNL. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies STR2, STR8, H11, EN1, EN18 and EN19 of the LP as it would not respect the context of the site, nor preserve and enhance the unique and diverse variety and juxtaposition of the borough's landscape.
28. As I have found that the proposal conflicts with criterion 1 of Policy H11 and that it would not be ancillary to the main dwelling in terms of use and scale I have no need to consider criterion a and b, as these would not be determinative.

Other Matters

29. The appellant has referred me to the proposal for a large garage building, which was allowed on appeal, suggesting that it is comparable in terms of its footprint and volume to that of the appeal proposal⁴. Be that as it may, there is no suggestion in that decision that the proposal amounted to anything other than ancillary accommodation, specifically garaging and a fitness studio. Its permission and existence do not indicate that the proposal for an extended annexe should be automatically accepted.
30. Even if I could accept that the wording of condition 4 of planning permission 04/02012/FUL for the conversion of a garage to the annexe implied that further built development would be acceptable here, that was over 20 years ago. If planning permission is required for a specific type of development, it must accord with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Since that time, both national and local planning policies have been updated, along with the statutory duty in 2023 which requires development to seek to further the purposes of NL. This presents a more positive approach to the enhancement of NL than the previous requirement to 'have regard to'. The context in which planning decisions are made today is therefore different to that when the annexe and garage were permitted.
31. The full details of the planning permissions granted in respect of the conversion of an outbuilding at Stream Farm to ancillary living accommodation and extensions and pitched roof to the garage outbuilding serving Stream Oast have not been presented to me. Therefore, I am unable to draw any comparisons with the appeal scheme. In any event, the crux of the issue here is not whether ancillary accommodation can be provided over 2 floors, but whether it would genuinely be ancillary to the main dwelling or tantamount to the creation of a completely separate dwelling.
32. I note that a neighbouring property has raised concerns regarding impact on neighbouring amenity in terms of light, noise, traffic and privacy. The Council has raised no concerns regarding impact on neighbouring amenity. Given the scale of the proposal, design, layout and distance of separation I have no reason to

⁴ Appeal reference APP/M2270/D/22/3295703.

disagree with this conclusion. Nonetheless, I am not required to consider these matters further given my findings in respect of the main issues.

Conclusion and Recommendation

33. I have identified harm to the character and appearance of the area, having regard to the site's location in the HWNL. Furthermore, the proposal would result in an annexe that would not be ancillary to the main dwelling in terms of use and scale and would lend itself to separate occupation or capable of being sold separately. The harms identified would be significant and would not be outweighed by any other considerations. Therefore, for the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Kirkaldy

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

34. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

M Clowes

INSPECTOR