



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 December 2025 by E Clifford BA (Hons) MA

Decision by M Russell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 April 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/F1610/W/25/3369773

2 Church Villas, Church Lane, Bledington, Gloucestershire OX7 6XD

- 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 Alan Turner against the decision of Cotswold District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/03556/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of self-build one bedroom dwelling/coach house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for erection of self-build one bedroom dwelling/coach house at 2 Church Villas, Church Lane, Bledington, Gloucestershire OX7 6XD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/03556/FUL, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no development permitted by virtue of Classes A, B, C, D, E, G and H of Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Order shall be undertaken.
 - 2) The timber cladding shall not be treated in any way which would alter its natural colour and shall be left to weather and silver naturally and shall be permanently retained as such thereafter.
 - 3) Within three months of the date of this permission, precise details of any boundary treatments to the perimeter of the appeal site including a timetable for the implementation of any such boundary treatments shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Once approved in writing, any boundary treatments on the site shall be in full accordance with the approved details.

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.

Applications for costs

3. A costs application has been submitted by the appellant. This is the subject of a separate recommendation.

Preliminary Matters

4. The evidence before me confirms that the site is located within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires that regard be had to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes (previously known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). I am also conscious of my duty under Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. These purposes also include increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the National Landscape. The effect of the appeal proposal on the landscape is not a matter in dispute between the main parties. However, having regard to my statutory duty, I have considered the CNL under the main issue.
5. During my site visit, I observed that the development shown on the proposed drawings has been substantially completed. Planning permission is therefore sought on a retrospective basis and I have defined the main issue on this basis.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

7. 2 Church Villas (No 2) is part of a semi-detached pair of dwellings. It is sited within a generous plot with a private driveway running to the side of the property. It is located at the edge of the boundary of Bledington, facing the Grade I Listed St Leonard's Church and has extensive views across the CNL and the open countryside. A public footpath runs to the north of the appeal site and continues west into open fields. The appeal site is located towards the rearmost part of No 2's plot alongside the private driveway.
8. The buildings in the village are a range of ages and there is much consistency to the material palette which predominantly comprises of red brick or Cotswold stone. This provides for a prevailing traditional aesthetic which complements the rurality of the area.
9. Due to its 'Dutch barn' influenced design, aluminium standing seam roof and timber clad elevations, the building alludes to an agrarian aesthetic. This to some extent responds to the edge of the settlement location and rural surrounds. However, this aesthetic is slightly compromised by the large first floor glazing to the front elevation. When viewed in conjunction with the subdivision of the plot at No 2, the gravel drive, garden space and any residential paraphernalia placed within these areas, the site would have an overtly domestic character and appearance. Furthermore, a dwelling of this style is not typical of the area. As a result of these factors the development is not fully respectful of the local vernacular or the rurality of the village fringe.
10. Even so, the Council's delegated report acknowledges that the site is visually and functionally located within the village. Indeed, from my own observations the development does not appear isolated or prominent alongside the existing built context of the settlement, such that the natural beauty of the CNL is preserved.

11. The modest scale of the building relative to the dwelling at No 2, the orientation of its front elevation away from the heart of the village, and the intervening hedgerows and other vegetation, ensure that appreciation of the development from public vantage points is limited.
12. Furthermore, I have been made aware that planning permission¹ has previously been granted for a building of a very similar footprint, scale, materials, and design to that which is the subject of this appeal. The approved scheme in that case was for an annex. Any intensification of use resulting through independent occupation of the dwelling or fencing to subdivide the plot are unlikely to be highly discernible when compared with the previous permission.
13. The fenestration detail on the previously approved building included shutters to the first-floor windows, which would have served to break up the expanse of glazing at that level. The appellant has indicated that they could be amenable to a condition requiring shutters to be added to the dwelling. However, from my observations on site, it is unclear whether timber shutters could be retrofitted to the windows installed and if they could whether this would complement the proportions of the windows which differ to those on the previous permission. In the circumstances, my findings are based on the design as submitted.
14. Taking all the above factors into account, the development has resulted in some very limited harm to the character and appearance of the area. In that regard, it conflicts with Policies EN1, EN2 and DS3 of the Cotswold District Local Plan (2018) which collectively require all development to ensure design standards that respect and complement the character of the settlement and distinctive appearance of the locality.

Other Matters

15. The evidence before me indicates that the nearby Church of St Leanard is a Grade I Listed Building and that there are Grade II Listed Monuments within its grounds. I also understand that the church's boundary forms part of the boundary of the Bledington Conservation Area (CA). Although no objection is raised by the Council in respect of the relationship with these heritage assets, I am required under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the settings of listed building, listed monuments and the CA.
16. The Church of St Leonards is an historic church which derives its special architectural interest from its age, construction, and architectural value as a traditional rural church. Together with its associated grounds and the arrangement of nearby buildings of traditional character, these factors contribute to a distinctive village setting. These factors are intrinsic to the settings of the identified heritage assets and add to their significance. Given its modest scale and its position relative to the heritage assets with intervening buildings and space, I concur with the Council that the development would preserve their settings. In that particular regard, there would be no conflict with Policy EN1 of the LP.
17. Notwithstanding the description of the proposal which includes 'self-build', the usual mechanism to secure a development which meets the provisions within the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015) would be through a legal

¹ 22/01118/FUL

agreement. Therefore, even if the dwelling has been designed and built by the intended occupier, I have no means to ensure it is a self and custom build development in terms of its occupation. Even so, my findings under the main issue do not turn on this matter and would be the same for a market dwelling.

18. Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) introduced a statutory framework for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), and it applies to all planning applications made on or after 12 February 2024. As such, unless exempt, development proposals are usually subject to the mandatory requirement to deliver a BNG of at least 10%. Given the above I cannot be certain that the dwelling would meet the self and custom build exemption for BNG.
19. However, as the development has already been undertaken, the pre-development biodiversity value cannot be ascertained. Moreover, the information before me, including the Council's report, suggests that the site formerly comprised a hard surfaced parking area serving No 2. Therefore, everything suggests that the development has not impacted on a priority habitat and that the site comprised of less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat. There is no evidence to the contrary. Consequently, based on the information available and in all that is practical and reasonable, this development is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan because a statutory exemption applies.

Conditions

20. As the scheme has already been undertaken as per the drawings and materials specified, conditions relating to a timescale for implementation and materials to be used are not necessary.
21. The Council have requested conditions in relation to permitted development rights, parking provision, and maintenance of the timber cladding.
22. I agree that a condition relating to permitted development rights is appropriate, given the bespoke design of the dwelling, modest parameters of the plot and the sensitivity of the site within the CNL. A condition requiring details of boundary treatments to be agreed will also ensure that any boundary treatments to the perimeter of the site respect the character and appearance of the area.
23. The Council have recommended that prior to occupation, provision for two car parking spaces each for the appeal dwelling and the host dwelling shall be provided and retained thereafter. However, the development has been carried out and includes a gravel drive and an integral garage. It would be a private matter as to whether this is shared with No 2. Moreover, there is nothing to indicate the absence of off-road parking for No 2 would lead to any significant inconvenience for occupiers of No 2 or other road users. Therefore, such a condition would not be reasonable or necessary.
24. The Council have recommended a condition relating to the maintenance of the timber cladding, stating that it shall not be treated and shall be allowed to weather and silver naturally and permanently retained as such thereafter. This reflects a condition that was attached to the previous permission for an annex. I consider it reasonable to include this to ensure the building retains a rural aesthetic helping it

to assimilate with its surroundings.

Conclusion and Recommendation

25. Following the decision on the application which led to this appeal, the Council reviewed its housing land supply position and confirmed that it can no longer demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. The appellant suggests that the supply stands at 1.8 years and this has not been disputed. The provision of one new dwelling would make a limited but positive contribution to the housing shortfall, and its occupation would have the potential for some limited social and economic benefits in the locality. These are matters which significantly and demonstrably outweigh the very limited harm identified under the main issue.
26. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be allowed.

E Clifford

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

M Russell

INSPECTOR