



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10th February 2026 by J Kirkaldy BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

Decision by Paul Thompson DipTRP MAUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/W/25/3370576

Old Cottage Paddock, Nettleden Road, Little Gaddesden, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 1PE

- 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 & Mrs C Marriott against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00916/FUL.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new dwelling with detached garage.
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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. 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 Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) throughout my decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the countryside, with regard to the significance of the Little Gaddesden Conservation Area (CA), through development within its setting and the landscape and the scenic beauty of the CNL.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Significance

5. The appeal site is located on the outskirts of the linear settlement of Little Gaddesden, within the CNL, and lies outside – but next to the CA, the boundaries of which lie to the front and side of the site, adjoining 1 Little Gaddesden. A Public Right of Way (PROW) runs parallel to the rear boundary. The site comprises of a detached, single-storey dwelling positioned back from the road within a generously sized plot. The surrounding context is predominantly rural, and the site is situated beyond any designated development boundary. Two-storey residential properties

adjoin the plot on either side and agricultural land extends to the rear. Mature trees line both side boundaries contributing to the site's established character.

6. The significance of the CA derives from its historic village character and the range of buildings of differing architectural style. The CA has a predominately linear form and comprises a range of dwellings of various ages, architectural style, size and form typically set within generously spaced plots. It retains a strong historical association with the Ashridge Estate, with influences of the Egerton and Brownlow families, former owners of the estate and much of the surrounding countryside. This is evident in the architectural detailing of many properties, including the characteristic Brownlow letter 'B' displayed on a shield. The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide (2010) (CBDG) emphasises that development proposals should respect the character of Little Gaddesden, recognising the particular design styles that underpin its special and distinctive identity. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets.
7. The primary purpose of the designation of the CNL is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty¹. The special qualities of the CNL include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower-rich downland, woodland, commons, tranquil valleys, network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, chalk streams and the rich historic environment. In performing functions that affect land in National Landscapes decision-makers must 'seek to further' the purposes for which these areas are designated². In addition to this statutory duty, the Framework requires great weight to be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes. The CBDG provides guidance on ways in which the outstanding and distinctive qualities of the CNL can be conserved or enhanced when building takes place.

Effect

8. The appeal site contributes to important views both into and out of the CA and the CNL. The Little Gaddesden Conservation Area Character Appraisal (the 'appraisal') identifies as a defining characteristic of the CA the prevalence of relatively low-rise, two-storey dwellings accompanied by predominately single-storey ancillary structures. It also recognises that many buildings within the CA are experienced from both their front and rear elevations. From the PROW there are glimpsed views of the existing single-storey dwelling, which occupies elevated ground relative to the footpath and is seen in the context of neighbouring dwellings within the CA.
9. The proposed replacement dwelling would be positioned in broadly the same position. However, by virtue of its increased bulk and scale, including an approximate 3 metre increase in ridge height over the existing dwelling, combined with the elevated position, it would appear significantly more prominent and visible from the PROW. This would result in a more perceptible visual relationship with nearby built form, including No 1, the first of the nineteenth century terrace within the adjoining CA, which comprises traditional two-storey dwellings of a notably lower ridge height. These effects would also be particularly evident in views on the approach into the village along Nettleden Road. As a consequence, the proposal would appear unduly dominant in views from within and towards the CA,

¹ As set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

² 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).

undermining the appreciation of its prevailing low-rise character and resulting in harm to the character and appearance of land within the setting of the CA, and therefore its significance.

10. The appraisal emphasises that buildings in the village are generally set back from their plot boundaries. It highlights pressures arising from recent proposals to introduce garages and outbuildings positioned at right angles to the host dwelling in order to achieve access from driveways. Such arrangements are noted as eroding the established building line, although it acknowledges that examples of this form of layout exist outside of the CA. The CBDG also advises that garage accommodation should not appear dominant within the street scene.
11. In this context, the angled orientation of the proposed garage would interrupt the established building line and, when combined with its height, approaching that of a two-storey structure, would significantly increase its visual prominence in views on the approach into the village. Its siting, alignment, scale and overall form would appear discordant, failing to reflect the modest, informal and subordinate characteristics that typically defines ancillary buildings within the village. As a result, the proposal would fail to preserve the spatial rhythm and built form that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the CA's setting and the wider CNL.
12. The appellants cite several properties where no consistent building line exists. However, Hoo House and Christmas House are not within the setting of the CA where the line is most clearly defined. Beaney Farm/Coach House and Christmas House are on the southern side of Nettleden Road, where development is generally more dispersed and October House sits unusually forward and is an isolated anomaly.
13. The appellants have also referred me to The Spinney, Nettleden Road where a triple bay garage has been constructed to the front of the dwelling. Whilst there are some similarities in terms of the size and scale, the context of the appeal site is materially different and therefore the comparison carries limited weight. The Spinney is not within the setting of the CA, and benefits from a greater set back from the road, combined with screening that limits its visibility. Likewise, the appellant's references to The Brown House, Chudleigh and The Oak House are not directly comparable, as these properties are not within the setting of the CA.
14. The appraisal identifies gabled roofs as a prevailing and characteristic feature of the CA. The introduction of a crown roof would be at odds within the established roofscape and would interrupt views that contribute to the appreciation of the CA, including those experienced from the wider area and along the PROW. Although the design incorporates hipped slopes to the sides of the crown section, the separation gap from the neighbouring properties, would expose the depth and massing of the crown roof, making it conspicuous. As such, it would appear as an incongruous feature within the street scene, contrasting with the prevailing hipped and pitched roof forms characteristic of the surrounding area.
15. The CBDG also recognises that shape, size and pitch of a roof can have a significant influence on the CNL. It specifically refers to flat roofs, an inherent component of the crown roof form, as being inconsistent with vernacular architecture in the Chilterns, and states that new dwellings should have a simple form with a pitched roof and a central ridge. As a result, the proposal would harm

the significance of the CA through development within its setting, and it would also undermine the special qualities of the CNL and would not seek to further the purposes of the CNL, namely to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.

16. The appellant has referred me to other examples of crown roofs in the locality, including Hoo House and 4 Nettleden Road. However, neither are within the setting of the CA, and their respective contexts differ from that of the appeal site. In any event, the presence of such developments elsewhere does not diminish or outweigh the harm I have identified, nor does it establish a precedent for them to be replicated elsewhere.
17. I recognise that the hedge planting at the front of the property, would, once established, soften and offer some degree of screening from the public realm. However, the extent of this benefit would rely on its ongoing maintenance and eventual height. Even with such planting in place, the proposal would be out of keeping with its surroundings. I also note that boundary treatments are not permanent features and may be altered or removed over time. In any event, limited visibility does not negate the requirement for development to achieve good design that responds positively to the character of the area.
18. The CBDG discourages rooflights on the front elevations and advises that dormers should be kept low on the roof. The proposal would introduce rooflights and dormers that would be visible and prominent, contrary to these principles. The CBDG also advises that front doors should be simple, with little or no glazing and without fan lights, to reflect local vernacular forms. The proposed detailing would not reflect these characteristics and would accentuate the building's visual prominence, to the detriment of both the CA's significance and the CNL. Although window and door details could, in principle, be secured by condition, this is not determinative given my overall findings.
19. Policy CS7 of the Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy (2013) (DCS) refers to small scale development in rural areas. Although both the appellant and Council observe that the proposed dwelling would occupy approximately 4% of the total site area, with the appellant contending that this proportion should be regarded as constituting 'small scale development', the policy does not define what constitutes 'small scale development'. However, Policy CS7 does allow for the replacement of existing buildings for the same use (criterion ii) and redevelopment of a previously developed site (criterion v) provided that such development would not have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside. It also requires the development supports the rural economy and maintenance of the wider countryside, which in this case includes both the CNL and the CA.
20. Saved Policy 23 of the Dacorum Borough Council Local Plan (2004) (DLP) supports replacement dwellings within the rural area, subject to a number of criteria including the requirement that any replacement dwelling should not be larger than the dwelling it replaces, nor exceed the size of the original dwelling on the site together with any extensions permissible under Policy 22. However, the quantitative thresholds previously contained within saved Policy 22 have since been removed.
21. In conclusion, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the countryside with particular regard to the significance of the CA and the landscape and the scenic beauty of the CNL. It would therefore be contrary to

saved Policies 23, 97 and appendix 3 of the DLP, Policies CS7, CS11, CS12 and CS24 of the DCS which seek to ensure development is sensitively integrated into the landscape, conserves its special qualities and respects established streetscape character and distinctive traditional built form. It would also be contrary to the Framework which seeks to secure high quality design and requires great weight to be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes and heritage assets.

Conclusion and Recommendation

22. The development conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised and to the approach in the Framework, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Kirkaldy

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

Paul Thompson

INSPECTOR