Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 August 2025

by S Rawle BA (Hons) Dip TP Solicitor

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th of August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/25/3360078
Warren Wood Barn, Hammerpond Road, Plummers Plain West Sussex RH13 6PE

- 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 Cook against the decision of Horsham District Council.
- The application Ref is DC/24/1615.
- The development proposed is the installation of windows and one dormer window to an existing forestry barn.

Decision

The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of windows and one dormer window to an existing forestry barn at Warren Wood Barn, Hammerpond Road, Plummers Plain West Sussex RH13 6PE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/24/1615, subject to the following conditions:

1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing numbers WBH0160.1 and WBH0160.3 Rev B.

3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in the materials shown on the approved plans and as stated on the application form.

Main Issue

1. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area including whether it would conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape.

Reasons

2. The site lies within the High Weald National Landscape. The statutory purpose of National Landscapes is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) now includes the duty on relevant authorities that they must seek to further this purpose when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty (now National Landscapes).

3. Furthermore, the Framework requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

4. The appeal site forms part of an existing forestry enterprise, and I observed at the site visit that there was considerable work being undertaken including tree clearance and cutting. That said, the activities on site are compatible with the sensitive countryside setting and do not undermine the natural beauty of the area.

5. The existing forestry barn is a substantial structure which does not have a utilitarian appearance. Rather, it is an attractive wooden clad building with a tiled roof with portions of the roof being half hipped and other parts being set down from the main ridge line. Again, this building sits comfortably within this countryside setting and does not harm the natural beauty of the area.

6. The ground floor of the existing barn is used for plank wood drying and storage whereas in 2024 a lawful development certificate was granted for internal alterations to create an office and WC on the first floor. The Council indicate that it is not apparent that the proposed windows would be reasonably required to facilitate the meaningful use of the existing building. I do not agree. I observed at the site visit that although there were two existing rooflights, internally the building is very dark and consequently, it is reasonable for windows to be inserted to provide light for both the ground and first floors to allow the existing building to function as intended.

7. The Council highlight that rooflights may be more appropriate. However, the proposed window types and positions are not harmful. They would not be excessive in number, would be well designed and would provide much needed natural light to the building. The proposed dormer window would not be a significant structure, would sit centrally on the roof slope and would be located discreetly on the rear elevation. As a result, the proposed development would be of an appropriate scale and would be compatible with the host building and with this sensitive countryside setting. It follows that not only would the proposal not harm the character and appearance of the host building, but it would also conserve the natural landscape and scenic beauty of the area.

8. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area and would conserve the natural landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald National Landscape. Consequently, the proposal would accord with Policies 25,26, 30,32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework, November 2015, which among other things seek to ensure that protected landscapes are protected from inappropriate development, development is of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location, complements the locally distinctive character and should conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald National Landscape.

Conditions

9. I have had regard to the conditions suggested by the Council taking account of the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

10. A condition is needed to secure compliance with the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. To ensure that the windows are constructed of timber it is necessary to impose a materials condition.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

S Rawle

INSPECTOR