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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2011

**by Graham M Garnham BA BPhil MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 7 February 2011

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**Appeal Ref: APP/T9501/D/10/2142292**

**Kennel Cottage, Clennell, Rothbury, Northumberland, NE65 7BG**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Jelley against the decision of Northumberland National Park Authority.
  - The application Ref 10NP0044, dated 2 November 2009, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2010.
  - The development proposed is conservatory.
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## Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

## Main Issues

2. I consider that these are firstly, the effect of the proposal on the local distinctiveness of this part of the National Park; and secondly, whether the development demonstrates a sustainable means of construction.

## Reasons

### ***First main issue – effect on local distinctiveness***

3. Kennel Cottage lies some way east of Clennell Cottages. I understand that the latter is a listed building. The Authority has adjudged that the proposal is far enough from the listed building to have no adverse impact on its setting. I have no reason to take a different view, and shall focus my consideration on local distinctiveness.
  4. Kennel Cottage is a small, detached, single storey building with stone walls and a hip-ended slate roof. The rear (northern) end is set into the rising land behind. The building sits comfortably and unobtrusively into the open landscape, in a small group of buildings of similar traditional construction and appearance that characterise the remoter parts of the National Park. The cottage has a small lean-to sun lounge that fits into the L shape of the main building and slopes down from the eaves line. This addition is of modest scale and clearly subservient to the main building. The sun lounge is in a poor state of repair and appears to need either significant renovation or replacement.
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5. The proposed conservatory would replace the sun lounge and retain the use of stone below the windows and for pillars. The eaves would be below that of the main building. However, the scale of the conservatory would be considerably larger than that of the sun room, being both wider and extending forward of the south elevation of the cottage. It would also appear as a distinct form of construction, with a central ridge line and roof slopes either side at a lower pitch than the main slate roof. The gable end and finial ridgeline detail would be very noticeably out of character, though these details could perhaps be amended through a planning condition. On the whole, however, I consider the proposal would be an incongruous addition out of scale and character with the host building.
6. Kennel Cottage is on lower ground than the main building in the group, and is of significantly smaller scale. I consider that its undue enlargement by a prominently sited conservatory would detract from this subservient relationship to the main building, which is a distinctive feature of the group. I consider that the existence of a modern conservatory with a finial detail on the end of Clennell Cottages furthest from the appeal site illustrates the incongruity and unsatisfactory design of what is being proposed.
7. The sun lounge is largely of timber and glass construction. In contrast the new conservatory would be formed of white uPVC. I acknowledge that this material is used for the doors and windows in the main cottage. However, I consider that the proposal would introduce an inappropriate modern material as the framework of a significant part of the finished building, quite out of character with the traditional materials predominantly used in the construction of the typical domestic scale buildings that add to the beauty and distinctiveness of the National Park.
8. I have found that the proposed conservatory would be an inappropriate addition to a modest traditional building, in terms of scale, form and material. It may be of relatively small scale compared, for example, to the nearby holiday park with numerous static caravans. Nonetheless, I consider that it would fail to be of a high quality design that would protect or enhance local character and distinctiveness or integrate satisfactorily with the existing building. I conclude that the proposal would materially harm the local distinctiveness of this part of the National Park. It would be contrary to Policies 1 & 3 in the Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework Core Strategy & Development Policies document (2009). It would also fall short of the standards expected in the Authority's Supplementary Planning Document [SPD], *Building Design Guide* (2006).

***Second main issue – demonstrating sustainable construction***

9. It is quite common for modern conservatories to be made of uPVC. This material is seen to have advantages in terms of ease of construction and maintenance as well as sound and weather insulation. In its SPD, the Authority states that it considers that the balance of argument between timber and uPVC, taken in the round, favours the use of naturally renewable timber with lower embodied energy and more sustainable sourcing. It nonetheless recognises that there are strong arguments for both materials (SPD, page 43.) Perhaps because of this, Policy 1 requires sustainable development that "demonstrates" the use of sustainable construction.

10. The proposal appears to have been designed by a company that undertakes uPVC installations, and does not seem to have been accompanied by a sustainability statement to justify the choice of this material rather than timber. I have therefore seen no substantive reasoning to demonstrate that, contrary to adopted policy, the use of uPVC would be sustainable in this instance. I give significant weight to this policy context, which the Authority sees in the context of its conservation aim to protect the character of traditional buildings throughout the National Park. It is thus in line with the statutory purposes of a National Park, which include the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and cultural heritage.
11. I conclude that the proposed development fails to demonstrate a sustainable means of construction, contrary to the policy context cited in paragraph 8 above.

***Overall conclusion***

12. On behalf of the appellant, I recognise the need to address the state of the sun lounge, and the protracted period of determination since the application was made. I also accept that the consequences for protected species, as identified in specialist reports, could be dealt with by means of a planning condition. However, I consider that these matters do not outweigh my findings against the proposal with respect to both the main issues.
13. Consequently, I conclude that planning permission should be withheld and the appeal dismissed.

*G Garnham*

INSPECTOR