
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

by P W Clark MA MRTPI MCMI

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

Decision date: 18 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/W/16/3151416

**Edlins Farm, Mountfield Lane, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex
TN32 5LD**

- 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 Frank Taylor against the decision of Rother District Council.
 - The application Ref RR/2015/2929/P, dated 25 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 15 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is changes to the external appearance of barn comprising insertion of windows and doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for changes to the external appearance of barn comprising insertion of windows and doors at Edlins Farm, Mountfield Lane, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5LD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref RR/2015/2929/P, dated 25 November 2015, subject to the condition that the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: drawings numbered 1 and 2 (entitled Drawing 3: West elevation and Drawing 2: South elevation) dated 29.2.2016 and drawing number 6 (entitled Drawing 1: East elevation) dated 4.2.2016.

Procedural matter

2. Although the address of the proposal is given as Edlins Farm, the proposal more particularly relates to a barn on the farm. Permission was originally sought "for the change in external appearance of the 150m² of barn which already has planning permission granted under the permitted development act for conversion to a guest house. The changes are as follows:- to clad the external metal walls with oak feather edge boarding and insert windows & doors as indicated on the enclosed drawings." By letter dated 6.1.16 the appellant deleted the cladding from the proposal. By e-mail dated 7.1.16 the Council acknowledged the amendment and suggested a corresponding change to the description of development. I have based the description of development in the headings above on this suggestion, omitting detail of the use proposed which is not the subject of this appeal.
 3. Amended drawings 1 and 2 dated 29 February 2016 and 6 dated 4 February 2016 were received by the Council and dated 1 March 2016, omitting the cladding. I have based my decision on these drawings, adding a condition to
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make it clear which drawings have been approved. Because the development has commenced, I do not apply the usual statutory condition requiring commencement within three years.

Reasons

4. The sole main issue is the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area. Much local objection relates to the use, proposed use, or alleged intended use of the barn but that is not before me.
5. The proposed windows (which had been installed at the time of my site visit) comprise simple side-hung casements. They are very similar in form, dimensions and details of metal surround to pre-existing windows in other parts of the barn and so would be entirely in character. The original windows are white-painted wood whereas those the subject of this appeal are dark-stained and so less obtrusive.
6. The submitted drawings do not show any detail of the doors to be installed. Those which I could see on the east elevation were similar to the Georgian panelled pattern of the pre-existing door in the east elevation and so not out of character. Their upper parts are glazed but that does not alter their essential pattern.
7. The side glazed panels to the door in the south elevation introduce a new feature but reflect something of the width of the original barn door currently in this position and so minimise any harm to the character and appearance of this otherwise utilitarian building.
8. The existing building can be seen fairly prominently across the field to its west from the nearby public road. The windows which have been inserted in the west elevation can be seen and so do alter its appearance but, because of their similar shape, form and detailing, are consistent with the barn's character. Because of their colour, they do not stand out as much as do the building's pre-existing windows and so do not alter its essential appearance as a long, low barn of agricultural, utilitarian character.
9. I conclude that the proposal would not adversely affect the character or appearance of the area. It would comply with policy OSS4(iii) of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy which requires development to respect and not detract from the character and appearance of the locality. It would do no harm to any distinctive identified landscape characteristic of the High Weald AONB and so would comply with policy EN1(i) and would be consistent with policy RA3(ii) which supports the conversion of farm buildings to employment and tourist facilities. I therefore allow the appeal.

P. W. Clark

Inspector