
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 November 2016

by Paul Jackson B Arch (Hons) RIBA

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

Decision date: 09 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/L3815/D/16/3155961

Barn Cottage, Fitzhall Road, Elsted, West Sussex GU29 0JS

- 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 W Burbridge against the decision of Chichester District Council.
 - The application Ref SDNP/16/01220/HOUS, dated 11 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of single storey extension. Demolition of dormer window to barn. Alterations, underpinning and renovation of existing barn. Construction of bedroom extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the building, which is a non-designated heritage asset in the South Downs National Park.

Reasons

Policy background

3. The development plan for the area includes the saved policies of the Chichester District Local Plan First Review of 1999 (LP). Policy RE1 restricts development in the rural areas outside settlement boundaries. RE14 seeks to control conversion and change of use of rural buildings and permits development providing, amongst other things, it conserves their character, fabric, and setting. BE4 places a high priority on protecting the character and appearance of all buildings of architectural or historic interest. Policy BE11 advises that new development must not detract from its surroundings and that criteria to be taken into account will include its effect on the local environment, its intrinsic design merit, its setting in the landscape and its relationship to and effect on neighbouring development. Policy H12 advises that planning permission will only be granted for an extension of a dwelling in the rural area if they meet criteria including that it would not detract from the rural character and appearance of the existing dwelling or the surrounding area in terms of scale, mass or design, particularly in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now the South Downs National Park (NP)).
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4. The draft South Downs Local Plan Preferred Options 2015 was approved in July 2015 but at the present time its policies carry only limited weight. However the South Downs Partnership Management Plan (SDPMP) of 2013 sets out the vision and long term outcomes for the national park (NP) and contains 5 year policies and a delivery framework. The statutory purposes of NPs are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas and promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities.
5. The LP is of considerable age and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of 2012 is an important material consideration. Paragraph 115 confirms that national parks have the highest status of protection and great weight should be given to conserving their landscape and scenic beauty. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Character and appearance

6. Barn Cottage is an isolated former barn converted to a dwelling many years ago. Despite domestic style windows on the west elevation, it retains a simple utilitarian agricultural appearance due to the retention of its original form together with traditional external materials, particularly the stone walls, clay tile roof and timber cladding. In this way it contributes strongly to the character of the area because it reflects and is intrinsic to the use of the land that formed the surrounding valued landscape. A narrow rear extension of sloping, small linked rooms, originally used for agricultural purposes, stretches into the garden. It is of simple solid wall construction and suffers from damp and continuing movement. The appellant intends to demolish this element to improve rear views from the main dwelling and erect a contemporary building containing sleeping accommodation on the west side joined to the barn by way of a glazed link. The main barn would be underpinned and internal accommodation reorganised with a modern heating system. An unsympathetic rear dormer window would be removed.
7. The building is not listed but is a non-designated heritage asset. The interior has been subject to alteration, though the original main trusses and structure survive. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF advises that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
8. The removal of the original extension, which is of limited practical use and of dubious construction, would not unacceptably harm the special interest of the main barn. The addition of the relatively modest contemporary bedroom, clearly separated from the host barn and appropriately detailed, would not prevent the appreciation and understanding of the barn and its contribution to the surrounding landscape. It is unclear what materials are proposed for the new extension, but the actual materials used could be the subject of a planning condition. The Council is keen to encourage a traditional form of construction, but a sensitively designed contemporary treatment with modern detailing can also complement and indeed enhance an adjacent historic building, in part

because of being completely different. Set down by a metre as proposed, with a grass or sedum low pitched roof, largely concealed from the road by vegetation, this part of the development, if well detailed, would be sufficiently subservient and would not conflict with the design quality objectives for extensions of LP policy H12 or the requirements of policies RE1, RE14, BE4 or BE11.

9. Turning to the proposals for the main barn, a double height space would remain in the important central portion where carts would have originally been loaded/unloaded. Similarly the removal of the domestic windows on the west elevation and the discordant dormer window are to be welcomed. Underpinning would ensure the building's long term survival and with appropriate conditions to ensure the structure would not be put at risk, would not compromise its heritage interest. With conditions to protect any archaeological features and record any unusual sub-floor fabric, the internal alterations including new heating could be carried out without losing important architectural or historic special interest and should be regarded as a further evolution in the domestic use of this heritage asset which will make its occupation as a dwelling more viable. In this connection, the existing buttresses provide strength and serve to express part of the building's history- it would not be desirable or necessary to remove them.
10. The adaptations to the main openings at ground floor level would not seriously alter the building's character, but the proposed projection of the first floor window openings in the manner proposed would impart a very different feel to the building. The indicated 'splayed' windows would appear uncomfortable and would be out of keeping. They would be an obviously incongruent feature seen from the road and further afield. Adapting a property which is a heritage asset and which contributes to the character of the area requires a balance between the needs of the present day occupants and retaining the heritage significance of the building, which in this case consists of the essentially utilitarian character of the original structure. These windows would be a step too far, would conspicuously detract from the buildings heritage significance and to an extent, the character of the surrounding area. They would conflict with the relevant aims of policies RE1, RE14, BE4 and BE11 and with the heritage protection policies of the NPPF.
11. For this reason, the appeal must be dismissed.

Paul Jackson

INSPECTOR