
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 January 2017

by Claire Searson MSc PGDip BSc (Hons) MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 30 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/16/3156637

Dalebrook Farm, Baslow Road, Eastmoor, Chesterfield, S42 7DD

- 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 John Vere against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref NP/NED/0516/0377, dated 2 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 28 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is conversion of barns to dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The appellant has submitted a draft Statement of Common Ground. However this document is unsigned and, accordingly, forms no basis of agreement between parties. I have therefore not taken account of this in my determination of the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the barns as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

4. Dalebrook Farm is a complex of buildings comprising of a farmhouse and a separate range of agricultural buildings in a 'U' plan form. These date from around the 1840s having then been altered and extended during the 1870s. These comprise of 2no 2-storey barns which are constructed from the local natural gritstone with stone slate roofs. These buildings are linked by a lower mono-pitched roof at a lower height. It is understood that this was a later alteration.
 5. To the western side is a later single storey range of barns. This range is also built in the local stone, but the roof is a modern replacement using corrugated sheeting. The buildings are in need of some maintenance, particularly the eastern range whereby cracks are visible in the masonry.
 6. The buildings are considered to be a non-designated heritage asset of local interest and the Council highlight the importance of the hay barn with the use of full height stone piers to the south side as a key characteristic of hay barns found within the National Park. My visit to the site confirmed that the range of
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- barns is substantial and a good example of vernacular traditional rural buildings. In particular I consider that the hay barn is characterised by its full height openings and its open interior.
7. The converted hay barn would comprise the main living accommodation for the dwelling including a living room, dining room and kitchen. It is proposed to insert a floor to provide first floor accommodation including a master suite, 3 other bedrooms as well as a bathroom and store. The southern wing would have its roof connecting to the hay barn reinstated and would form the main entrance to the property as well as a utility room, hall and stair and guest room. The western wing would be re-roofed and used as storage.
 8. In converting the hay-barn so that it would provide the majority of the accommodation for the proposed dwelling, I consider that the level of sub-division would be excessive and its spatial qualities and significance would be lost. Externally, the large openings would be infilled with glazing at ground floor level and timber boarding with vertical fenestration to the first floor. Rather than being a minimalist, modern and honest intervention, I consider that the design of this would emphasise the addition of an upper floor into the structure and would be a conspicuous addition at odds with the agricultural character of the buildings.
 9. I accept that at present the openings of the hay barn are partially infilled by timber boarding. However, this boarding is a poor quality and modern installation which appears to be temporary in nature and could easily be removed to restore the original appearance of the hay barn. The presence of this boarding would not therefore justify a greater and permanent infilling and alteration of the hay barn openings.
 10. There can be no doubt that as a general principle, the re-use of rural buildings is inherently sustainable and that repair of the buildings, including the re-roofing of the western wing and the restoration of the original height of the roof linking the southern and eastern barns would represent a significant enhancement to these non-designated heritage assets.
 11. However, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) any such work should be constant with the conservation of the non-designated heritage asset and, on balance, I consider the conversion would give rise to a domestic character and appearance and the agricultural character and significance of the building would be eroded, causing harm.
 12. While I have no details of the particulars of the case at Over Haddon, the submitted photograph contained within the Heritage Statement serves to confirm that the infilling between the stone piers does fundamentally change the character of such buildings and accordingly should not justify the harm I have identified to the barns at Dalebrook Farm.
 13. It is clear from the Officer Report that the Council's concerns were centred around the hay barn and that other elements of the scheme were acceptable. Nonetheless, the hay barn forms a significant part of the whole barn complex and in assessing the proposals in respect of the whole unit, the change in character is as such that it would affect the character of the barns taken as a whole.
 14. No evidence has been put forward in respect of viability considerations which may have led to the proposed design and intensity of use. In any case, I am

also mindful that, as a whole, the scale of the U-shaped barns offers much scope for residential accommodation which may not conflict with the significance and quality of this non-designated heritage asset.

15. In their Decision Notice the Council make reference to there being no public benefits which outweigh the harm. However, for a non-designated heritage asset there is no requirement to weigh proposals against any such public benefits. Instead, paragraph 135 of the Framework states that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
16. With any conversion or adaptation there is a balance to be struck between incorporating the practical requirements of a new use and protecting the agricultural character and significance of the buildings. In this case, for the reasons stated above, and in the absence of any evidence in respect of viability, I find that the proposal fails to strike that balance.
17. Overall, I conclude that the development fails to preserve the character and appearance of the barns as a non-designated heritage asset. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with Policies GSP2, GSP3 and L3 of the Peak District National Park Core Strategy (2011) which seek to secure development which conserves and enhance all valued characteristics of buildings, including heritage assets of local importance or special interest. The development would also conflict with Policy HC1, insofar as this policy supports open market housing where the development would achieve the conservation and/or enhancement of valued vernacular buildings. In respect of the Peak District National Park Local Plan (2003), Policies LC4 and LC8 require that conversions should not adversely affect its character and valued characteristics. Again, the development would conflict with these policies.
18. Finally, the development would not accord with paragraphs 131 and 135 of the Framework as well as paragraph 17 which, as a core planning principle, requires that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

Other matters

19. I note the absence of harm in respect of biodiversity, amenity, drainage and other issues. Nonetheless, these factors would not outweigh the harm I have identified to character and appearance of the barns and the development does not benefit from any policy support in this respect.
20. I note the Council has sought to make alternative suggestions in respect of the design which are queried by the appellant, however I have determined the appeal on the basis of the submitted plans and on the evidence before me.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Searson
INSPECTOR