The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 March 2017

by Christa Masters MA (hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 31st March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/W/16/3158675
Barn to the south of the B4425 and north west of Cuckoo Pen Farmhouse

- 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 Freelands Farm Ltd against the decision of West Oxfordshire District Council.
- The application Ref 16/02359/FUL, dated 22 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 August 2016.
- The development proposed is proposed conversion and alterations to barn and curtilage to create 6 bedroomed dwelling, the use of which approved by prior approval notification 16/00046/PN56.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appellant has advised that an earlier application for prior approval for use of the existing barn as a dwelling house was approved in January 2016. The appellant has also stated that planning permission has been granted for a similar scheme with minor alterations to the roof profile and lean to side element. I have been provided with a copy of this decision notice and the drawings which accompanied this application. Where necessary, I shall return to this matter below.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a stone barn in an isolated location accessed via an unmade track. The existing barn is a simple structure reflective of the properties former use as an agricultural storage barn. It has an existing single storey element as well as an existing metal framed open shelter on the north east elevation of the main barn. The site is surrounded by relatively flat agricultural land which gives the immediate area an intrinsically rural character. The site is highly visible from the B4425 which runs parallel with the access road. The Design and Access Statement notes the surrounding context is predominantly traditional in form with a restricted pallet of materials. From the limited built development I saw on the site visit, I can see no reason to disagree with this statement.

5. The proposed works would result in the raising of the roof of the main barn, and glazing would be fitted along the existing eaves. This is in my view a significant alteration to the property, which would emphasise the appearance and visual prominence of the property as a domestic dwelling to the detriment of the original structure which is simple in appearance. The appellant has advised that the glazing will enhance the buildings sustainability credentials however I have no evidence to support this statement. Although I acknowledge the proposal would have a localised effect, it would nevertheless cause harm to the rural character and appearance of the area. The proposed works would present a prominent addition to the building, which would be readily visible in longer distant views of the site.

6. The appellant states that the proposed development will be a significant enhancement to the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of the area. The appeal statement also states the proposal would lead to considerable landscape improvements and biodiversity enhancements. However, I have limited evidence to support these statements. The appellant has also referred to the Council's design guidance in support of the appeal however I have not been provided with this document.

7. The appeal statement states that the local plan policies are not consistent with the GPDO. The appellant also states that if the works were submitted under Class Q (b) the submission would be considered to fall within that scope. I have no evidence to support this statement. Moreover, the proposal before me is not a proposal made under the GPDO. This limits the weight I can attach to this statement.

8. The Council have also raised concerns regarding the inclusion of the single storey lean-to element of the property on the north east elevation of the building. Whilst it covers a large proportion of the elevation, it is nevertheless an existing structure which is proportionate in scale and form to the main barn structure. In the context of this appeal, I do not consider it is either reasonable or necessary to require its removal.

9. In reaching the above view, I have had regard to planning application reference 16/01358/FUL which granted planning permission for works associated with the conversion of the property to a dwelling. However, from the information provided, it would appear to me that the roof height in this scheme was maintained as existing. This is not the case here. The appellant states that the appeal proposal is considered to be more appropriate than this earlier permission although I have limited evidence to support this statement. Whilst I acknowledge that the appeal proposal may afford the upper floor greater light, this factor alone is not sufficient to outweigh the harm the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the original building and the area generally.

10. To conclude, the proposal would conflict with policies BE2, H2 and BE10 of the Adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan (LP) 2011. Policy BE2 advises, amongst other things, that new development should respect and where possible improve the character and quality of its surroundings. The policy goes onto note that extensions to existing buildings should respect or enhance the form, siting, scale and external materials of adjoining buildings. Policy H2 goes onto note that extensions should not erode the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Policy BE10 relates to the conversions of unlisted vernacular

buildings and advises that proposals should not extensively alter the existing structure or include extensions which would obscure the form of the original building.

11. My attention has also been drawn to policies OS2, OS4 and E3 of the Emerging Local Plan, 2031. However, as these are emerging policies only, I can only attach limited weight to them. Nevertheless, there is nothing contained within these policies which would alter my conclusion on the main issue.

12. For these reasons, I therefore conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Christa Masters

Inspector