
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 September 2017

by Jonathan Hockley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 13th September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/D/17/3180564

1 Abbey Farm Barns, Eynsham, Witney, Oxon OX29 4FA

- 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 Ms Helen Hannay against the decision of West Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 17/00933/HHD, dated 1 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 16 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is an erection of porch to front of property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property, and whether the scheme would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Eynsham Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The fairly large village of Eynsham lies to the north west of Oxford, with the settlement occupying an area to the south of the busy A40 road. The Eynsham Conservation Area (ECA) covers quite a large area, with its focus on the market place. Many of the older properties are constructed in limestone with slate roofs, and buildings are primarily 2 or 2½ storeys high. Buildings are often built to pavement edges. Towards the southern fringes of the ECA development becomes more sporadic, with more agricultural buildings and a large area of open countryside included within the boundaries of the ECA.
4. The appeal site lies within such southern fringes of the village. Abbey Farm Barns is a cul-de-sac with a range of development off it; no 1 Abbey Farm Barns appears to constitute one half of a former barn on the northern edges of a range of barns which have been converted to domestic use, with the appeal site barn range forming an upside down 'L' shape. Further barns lie to the east and south of the range. The barns are all clearly residential in use, with extensive glazing and roof lights visible. However, despite this appearance, the buildings maintain the essential shape and form of barns, and views of rear gardens and domestic paraphernalia are largely restricted by high stone walls.
5. The proposal seeks to construct a small porch on the western gable end of the property. Plans indicate that the porch would have a pitched roof to match the

- host building and would similarly be constructed in stone and tiled to match the former barn.
6. The West Oxfordshire Design Guide (the Design Guide) states that when considering the conversion of agricultural buildings, the plan and massing should remain substantially unaltered, and notes that it is generally difficult to extend or enlarge an agricultural building without causing some harm to its character.
 7. The size and scale of the proposal would be small. However, it would be located on a very visible location, being clearly apparent when approaching the development along Abbey Farm Barns. The design and nature of the porch would alter the plan form of the building, and would appear out of place amongst the simple basic form of the barns. Its prominent location would draw attention to this effect.
 8. Whilst I do not consider that due to its size the porch would dominate the form and character of the former agricultural building, its location and scale would appear out of place and incongruous, and would domesticate the appearance of the barns further. This would in turn have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the ECA, to which the range of barns makes an important contribution. I note that the porch would have benefits for the appellant in terms of energy efficiency. However, such benefits are not quantified and I do not consider that these would outweigh the less than substantial harm that the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the ECA.
 9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the host property, and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or the appearance of the Eynsham Conservation Area. The proposal would be contrary to Policies BE2 and BE5 of the Local Plan¹, which when taken together state that new development should respect and improve the character of the surroundings and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas, as well as being contrary to the Design Guide.
 10. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR

¹ West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, June 2006