



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 January 2018

by Jonathan Hockley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 24 January 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/B1550/W/17/3181240

Great Wheatley Farm, Great Wheatley Road, Rayleigh SS6 7AR

- 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 Tony Dean against the decision of Rochford District Council.
 - The application Ref 17/00369/FUL, dated 10 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 14 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is the refurbishment and extension of Grade II listed barn. Create two mezzanine floors with stair access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the refurbishment and extension of Grade II listed barn. Create two mezzanine floors with stair access at Great Wheatley Farm, Great Wheatley Road, Rayleigh SS6 7AR in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 17/00369/FUL, dated 10 April 2017, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) No development shall commence, before details of all external facing (including windows and doors) and roofing materials to be used in the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed materials shall be those used in the development hereby permitted.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2444 01, 2444 03.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are as follows:
 - Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and on the special architectural and historical interest of the Grade II listed building.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The Framework states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to a number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 89. One of the exceptions is the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
4. Although not referred to in the reasons for refusal, Policies GB1 and GB2 of the Core Strategy¹ together state that development will be directed away from the Green Belt as far as possible and that the Council will maintain a restrictive approach to development in the Green Belt, but the continuation of existing rural businesses will be encouraged. Policies DM11 and DM13 of the Development Management Plan² state that the reuse, adaptation or extension of existing agricultural buildings in the Green Belt will be supported provided that the proposal does not exceed the footprint of the original building and that where an extension is proposed it does not result in a disproportionate increase in floorspace over that of the original building.
5. The Framework defines an 'original building' as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948, or if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally. Very similar definitions are contained within the supporting text of the Development Management Plan, which states in the preamble to Policy DM13 that the 'original building' refers to the floor area as at 1948 or later (depending on when the building was constructed).
6. The proposal seeks to extend a Grade II listed barn, sited some 8m to the east of the Grade II listed Great Wheatley Farmhouse. The barn was damaged by a storm in 1987, which destroyed a previous eastern transeptal midstorey. The proposal seeks to extend the barn back to its form and shape pre 1987, by extending the building and removing a later car port and brick end wall which was installed after the storm damage. The listing notes that the barn dates from the 17th century, or possibly earlier.
7. Although the Council do not dispute the size of the barn prior to 1987, they are of the view that since the building has been in its current state for some 30 years and that there has been no previous intention to reinstate the former building, the original building is considered to represent that which exists on site now, rather than the building that may have existed previously. However, this is contrary to the definition of 'original building' which exists in both the Framework and the Development Management Plan. The proposal would return the barn to its size and form of 1948, and therefore by definition return the barn to its original size. Previous footings and foundations of much of the former extent of the barn are also clearly visible on site.
8. Consequently no additions over and above the size of the original building are proposed by the scheme, and nor would the proposal exceed the footprint of

¹ Local Development Framework Core Strategy Adopted Version, Rochford District Council 2011

² Local Development Framework Development Management Plan, Rochford District Council 2014

the original building. The proposal would comply in this respect with the Framework, policies GB1 and GB2 of the Core Strategy, and policies DM11 and DM13 of the Development Management Plan.

9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies.

Character and appearance

10. Great Wheatley Farm lies on the western fringes of Rayleigh. Great Wheatley road is a residential street largely made up of detached dwellings on both sides of the road. Towards the western end of the street development ceases on the north side of the road, giving way to open fields and countryside. Fleeting glimpses are possible of Great Wheatley Farm from this area, with the barn prominent in such views due to its positioning to the east and south of the main Farmhouse. A range of other outbuildings to the east are also visible from such viewpoints.
11. The proposal would extend the barn further to the east, increasing the mass and bulk of the building. However, this additional volume would be mitigated visually by the existence of the existing lean to extension on the east side of the building, which would be removed, and the existing building further to the east. This particular building is a fairly large modern red brick structure. The extension of the barn to its former size would serve to enclose a farmyard area to the north of the barn between the modern building to the east, further outbuildings to the north and the Farmhouse to the west. In such a way I do not consider that the proposal would visually encroach into the countryside, and provided materials were appropriate, which could be conditioned, would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area.
12. The barn is constructed in timber and dates from the 17th century or possibly earlier according to the listing. The building has a tarred red brick plinth and a corrugated iron clad roof. Modern lean to extensions are sited on both east and west ends. An assessment submitted with the appeal notes that the original layout of the barn was as a long rectangle orientated east-west, with two gabled midstreys protruding a few feet from the northern wall. Internally the construction of the barn is impressive, with the assessment considering it to be 'late medieval Essex timber construction at its most sophisticated'. I consider that the significance of the barn derives from its setting as part of the farmyard of Great Wheatley Farm, its prominent setting within this farmyard, and the quality of its construction.
13. The rebuilding of the barn to its former size and reconstruction of the northern transept and eastern section would reinstate the original form of the barn and help to enable a viable use of the building. The rebuilding would also make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, and provided reconstruction and materials were sympathetic, would not cause harm to the significance of the listed building. In this respect I also note that listed building consent has already been granted for the proposal, and that no change of use for the building is proposed by the scheme.
14. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area, or on the special architectural and historical interest of the Grade II listed building. The scheme would comply

with policy DM11 and DM13 of the Development Management Plan, which in this respect states that the adaptation of rural buildings will be supported provided that the scale, design and siting is such that the character and appearance of the countryside and Green Belt is not harmed.

Conditions and Conclusion

15. I have imposed conditions concerning time for implementation and for materials to be agreed, as noted above. Such conditions are required in the interests of certainty and of the special architectural and historical interest of the host building and the character of the surrounding area. A further condition is also imposed stipulating the plans that the consent refers to. A condition is suggested by the County Historic Environment Advisor for archaeological work. However, given that the proposal would rebuild from previous foundations and that conversion is not proposed I do not consider such a condition to be necessary.
16. I have found that the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area, or on the special architectural and historical interest of the Grade II listed building. Therefore, for the reasons given above, and having regard to any other matter raised I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR