The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2018

by S Wilkinson BSc (Hons) DipUP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 July 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/D/18/3199045
Willow Barn, Rectory Lane, Upton Warren, Worcestershire, B61 7EG

- 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 A Harper against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
- The application Ref 17/02243/HP, dated 25 October 2017, was refused by notice dated 5 January 2018.
- The development proposed is construction of dormer window to the front elevation roof. Retrospective application.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The dormer windows have been completed. I observed no obvious discrepancy between the drawings before me and what I saw on site. As such I have determined the appeal on both the drawings and what has been built.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing building.

Reasons

4. Willow Barn is a modest single storey brick building which forms part of a U-shaped courtyard of similar single and two-storey buildings attached to the original farmhouse which faces onto Rectory Lane. The appeal site lies at the periphery of Upton Warren and outside of the settlement boundary as defined by the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016 (Local Plan). The high hedges, trees and fragmented pattern of generally modest and well-proportioned properties along the lane, with agricultural land beyond, give the area an intrinsically rural character

5. From evidence submitted by the appellant and not disputed by the Council, the courtyard brick built barn complex was constructed in the late 19th century. The historic plan form and fabric of the buildings and the relationship between the barns and Rectory Farm provides historical evidence of the changing agricultural practices in this rural area. The residential conversion of these former agricultural buildings has sought to ensure that the former buildings' character and appearance were retained.

6. The Council states that the appeal dwelling is a non-designated heritage asset. The appellant does not specifically dispute this, however, they do point out that the building is neither locally nor nationally listed. In my view, the architectural merit of the buildings which are largely unaltered, along with their age, more than justifies their designation as a non-designated heritage asset. Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when weighing applications that affect directly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset.

7. Although located on an extended part of the original building, the dormers interrupt the distinctive linear quality of the courtyard building and increase the height of the eaves. Their presence is at significant variance with the original long and unbroken roof design. They create strident features which are, I find, out of keeping with the prevailing character of the uniformity and interest of these traditional pitched roofs. Although set back from the public highway, the dormers are dominant and prominent when viewed from Rectory Lane. Whilst reasonably localised in its extent, the effect of the scheme diminishes unacceptably the character, appearance and integrity of the building with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

8. Roof lights are included within the conversions. Nevertheless, these are small in scale and have been discretely added to the roof so that they do not detract from the character and appearance of the building. I note the presence of dormer windows in the two-storey range along Rectory Lane and in a neighbouring two –storey building. However, these are I find considerably more in keeping with their respective buildings and cannot be readily compared to the dormer windows before me, which take on a significantly more domestic appearance rather than as a traditional hay loft as the appellant invites me to find.

9. I acknowledge that planning decisions should not stifle originality through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. I also accept that the proposed dormer windows would improve the accommodation levels of the property by allowing more headroom and light, and that they have been constructed of traditional materials. However, I do not find that these matters are of sufficient merit to warrant allowing such a prominent feature which harms the character and heritage interest of this non-designated heritage asset.

10. Overall the scheme harms the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding area and is in conflict with Policies SWDP6, SWDP21 and SWDP24 of the Local Plan. These policies state, amongst other things, that new development should conserve and enhance the significance of heritage and non-heritage assets and require high quality design which reinforces and conserves local distinctiveness.

Conclusion

11. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Wilkinson

INSPECTOR