



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 September 2019

by L Crouch BA (Hons) MSc IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/D0121/D/19/3230949

**Stepstones Farm, Old Weston Road, Congresbury, North Somerset
BS49 5ED**

- 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 and Mrs S Ward against the decision of North Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 19/P/0366/FUH, dated 7 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 9 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is for 'three car private/domestic garage'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Stepstones Farm is a detached two storey farmhouse set within a spacious plot, with a hedgerow boundary along Dolemoor Lane, and views into the site from the junction of Old Weston Road. The appeal site also contains a number of ancillary outbuildings. The appeal site has a rural character due to its location on Old Weston Road and Dolemoor Lane, which are bordered by mature hedgerows, giving the street scene a verdant character, with views possible to the fields beyond, which gives the vicinity of the site an appreciable countryside quality.
4. From my site visit I saw that the farmhouse, although not listed nor in a conservation area, is a well-proportioned, attractive building in a predominately L-shape form, with a two storey projection and a single storey lean-to on the north elevation. The south elevation fronts onto Dolemoor Lane and has been described by the appellant as the 'principal' elevation. The north elevation faces into the farmyard and is visible from Old Weston Road.
5. The proposed detached triple garage would be sited to the side of the farmhouse and would project forward of the north elevation of the farmhouse by approximately 4 metres. The appellant states that this siting has been

chosen due to the desire to avoid an apple tree, which I was also able to see on my site visit.

6. The triple garage would be appropriate in terms of its single storey height and in-keeping with the farmhouse with a render finish and gable roof form. However, the depth of the proposal, would be approximately the same as the existing farmhouse, when including the rear projections. The structure's length, and long expanse of roof slope, would result in an overly bulky depth and elongated elevation.
7. When combined with its siting near the farmhouse, and its projection past the north elevation, the proposal would result in a garage which is of a significant scale in relation to the farmhouse, and not subservient in its proportions or siting, despite the size of the curtilage. I was able to see from my site visit that this elevation is visible, despite the planting on the boundary, from the junction of Old Weston Road where it meets Dolemoor Lane. Whilst not the principal elevation in terms of appearance of the farmhouse, the north elevation is the most prominent from Old Weston Road.
8. The proposed garage doors, due to their up and over design, and metal material, would have a harmful suburbanising impact rather than being sympathetic to the rural, traditional materials of the main house and its rural setting. There are other examples of up and over metal garage doors in the area. However, these are on smaller garages ancillary to dwellings of a different character. As a consequence, they do not justify the proposal before me.
9. For similar reasons, the proposal would be visible in the street scene and appear out of keeping with its rural surroundings, despite the hedgerow boundary along Dolemoor Lane. The development would be particularly and harmfully visible when viewed from the junction of Old Weston Road and Dolemoor Lane being not sufficiently screened by the hedgerow boundary. With the siting closer to the road, and the scale, the proposed development would appear disproportionate in relation to the farmhouse. Therefore, given the visibility within the street scene, the proposal would also have a harmful impact on the surrounding area, even though there is no established street pattern or building line.
10. The North Somerset Council Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Section Two 2014 (SPD) states that garages 'should not be overly large so that they dominate either the original house or street scene', which the proposal would not comply with. Although I recognise that the proposed rectangular shape of the garage would be comparable with the shape of the farmhouse and outbuildings, the proposed openings on the rear and end of the garage would be similar to those found on the farmhouse in their proportion, scale and design, and the garage would be smaller in its footprint than the farmhouse, and that these elements would be in-line with the guidance of the SPD.
11. I conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area. As such, it would be in conflict with Policy CS12 of the North Somerset Council Core Strategy 2017 and Policies DM32 and DM38 of the North Somerset Council Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) 2016. These policies collectively seek to ensure high quality design which respects the scale, materials and proportions of the

existing property; is sensitive to existing local character; does not harm the street scene; and enhances local distinctiveness.

12. There would also be conflict with the principles set out in the accompanying SPD, which seeks to ensure that garages are not overly large or dominating to either the original house or street scene.

Other Matters

13. I recognise that the position of the garage would enable the retention of the apple tree, which does contribute to the setting of the farmhouse. I also recognise that the appellant says that there is currently no garaging on site and a secure covered parking area is required for security and to protect the vehicles from adverse weather. However, these would be modest benefits and would not outweigh the harm I have identified.
14. I note that the Parish Council supported the proposal, and there were no comments received from surrounding neighbours. Nevertheless, I have considered the proposal on its planning merits, which are not in its favour.
15. The appellant contends that the density of the appeal scheme would be low and would be in-keeping with the 'local pattern and grain' of development. They contrast this with the nearby approved scheme Withydale Farm, which they say has a denser form of development. Still, the harm that I have identified with the appeal scheme relates to the overall scale of the garage in terms of its length and depth and not density. Therefore, the appellant's comparison to another site on density does not lead me to another conclusion.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

L Crouch

INSPECTOR