
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 October 2019

by Helen O'Connor LLB MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/19/3234714

The Byre, Ladywood Road, Salwarpe, Droitwich WR9 0AH

- 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 & Mrs M Roberts against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00951/HP, dated 18 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is a link extension between The Byre and The Old Dairy building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a link extension between The Byre and The Old Dairy building at The Byre, Ladywood Road, Salwarpe, Droitwich WR9 0AH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/00951/HP, dated 18 April 2019, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Location Plan 0696-01/01 and Proposed Extension 1338/03A.
 - 3) Aside from the remnant red brick wall on the north east elevation the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in materials to match those at The Byre and The Old Dairy building.

Procedural Matters

2. In my heading above I have used the site address given on the appeal form as this omits the reference to Middleton Farm and includes a reference to Droitwich and therefore, is a more accurate reflection of the address.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site relates to two converted former agricultural buildings known as The Byre and The Old Dairy which now comprise separate single storey

dwellings that are centrally located within a cluster of residential and agricultural buildings at Middleton Farm. The Byre has a simple linear form and pitched roof and is positioned generally at a right angle to The Old Dairy which is more prominently positioned in relation to the access lane. The Old Dairy is a more irregular building, constructed from brick and utilising both pitched and mono pitch roof forms.

5. The appearance of The Old Dairy is unremarkable which is commensurate with its construction after at least 1927¹ and subsequent alterations². As such it does not obviously reflect a historic or previous agricultural use. The form and appearance of The Byre is more consistent with a modest vernacular agricultural building but neither building is of particular architectural merit. Nevertheless, their spacious grouping as part of the buildings around Middleton Farm, which in turn is surrounded by agricultural fields, results in a pleasant rural character.
6. The proposal would introduce an extension that would link the two dwellings together as one larger unit utilising a two-storey element that would also incorporate the remnants of a red brick wall from a previous structure within the site. The height and monopitch roof on the north west elevation would result in a prominent and distinctive addition which would add interest to the otherwise ordinary front elevation of The Old Dairy building. It responds to the existing monopitch roof design resulting in a contemporary asymmetrical appearance to the dwelling. In contrast, the sections of glazing used in the single storey rear element of the extension provide an obvious design break between the different styles of the two dwellings. As a result, the simple linear form of The Byre is not harmed and would remain clearly discernible, particularly in the longer south west and south east elevations.
7. Neither would the siting of the extension harmfully diminish the sense of space surrounding the buildings as a significant open area to the front of The Old Dairy would be retained, as would the large open area to the south west of the principal elevation of The Byre.
8. I accept that the proposed extension does resist the conventional guidance for extensions set out in the South Worcestershire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, March 2018 (SPD)³ in that it would be higher than The Old Dairy and positioned forward of it. Nevertheless, whilst this general guidance holds true for many extensions of regular residential built form, it is not universally applicable. In these circumstances, the proposal is unconventional in that it is not a mere continuation of an existing dwelling, rather it seeks to join two buildings of differing styles together. To my mind, it is an appropriate response to seek a more innovative design solution than might generally be advocated in the SPD. Furthermore, in this context the limited architectural significance of the buildings and absence of a strong building line allows for such an approach.
9. Additionally, the explanation for policy SWDP21 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, February 2016 (SWDP) which sets out criteria to achieve a high quality of design encourages the use of innovative and contemporary design that enhances the overall quality of the townscape, either in established

¹ Extract from 1927 OS map on drawing 1338/04A

² Paragraph 2.1 Structural survey dated 28.11.2001, Appendix G Council's appeal statement

³ Section 8, Note 1 General Design Principles for Extensions

core areas or as extensions to more recent development. It further acknowledges that innovative designs can be successful when integrated into conservation areas or as extensions to historic buildings and do not need to be confined to areas outside these designations. As such, it does not suggest that such an approach should not be used in a rural environment.

10. There is no dispute between the parties that the buildings are not listed, nor in a conservation area and it is not part of the Council's case that either The Byre or The Old Dairy should be considered as a non-designated heritage asset. In any event, for the reasons already outlined, the appeal proposal would not be harmful to the significance of The Byre or The Old Dairy. Whilst I have had regard to the planning history of the appeal site outlined by the Council, given that I consider the proposed design would be acceptable on its own merits, this attracts limited weight.
11. The Council has indicated that the proposal would conflict with policy SWDP25 of the SWDP which seeks to protect landscape character, although neither party has provided substantive evidence in relation to the latest Landscape Character Assessment as advocated by that policy. Accordingly, it is not shown how the proposal would compromise the character of the surrounding landscape particularly given that the appeal site sits within a cluster of other residential and agricultural built form. The presence of these buildings combined with the relatively modest scale of the proposal would prevent the development from having an impact on wider views.
12. Therefore, I find that the proposal would not harm the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area and hence, would accord with policies SWDP21 and SWDP25 of the SWDP.

Conditions

13. The Council has suggested 3 conditions. In addition to the standard time limit for commencement of development, I agree it is necessary to have a condition specifying approved drawings to provide certainty. Furthermore, given the absence of a reference to the external materials to be used on the proposed plans, I have imposed a condition to require that the external materials match the existing materials at The Byre and The Old Dairy building in accordance with the application form.
14. The Council suggest it is necessary to condition the development to proceed with the submitted Water Management Statement. However, this is of a general nature confirming that the development will be connected to the mains water supply and will utilise the existing foul treatment plant and porous surfaces. As such, it is not necessary to condition this in order to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms, the more detailed aspects of which would, in any event, be more appropriately covered by the building regulations.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Helen O'Connor

Inspector