
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2019

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/19/3237122

Leach Barn, Leadmill Bridge, Leadmill, Hathersage S32 1BA

- 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 Trevor Smith against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref NP/DDD/1018/0951, dated 16 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 17 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'conversion of a barn to a local needs dwelling'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Peak District National Park Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (the DPD) was adopted by the National Park Authority in May 2019. This replaced saved policies in the 2001 Peak District National Park Local Plan (the LP) cited in the decision notice. I have therefore considered the proposal against the relevant policies of the DPD which were referred to in the authority's officer report and appeal statement, and on which the appellant has also had the opportunity to comment.
3. Amended plans were submitted to and accepted by the Council during the course of the application, and consequently two versions of the proposed plans and elevations drawing are before me. The appellant's statement has made it clear that the appeal relates to the amended plans (drawing number 1404.PL05 Rev.B) which were considered by the Council before making its decision. I have therefore assessed the appeal on the same basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the barn and the area, having particular regard to the statutory purposes of the National Park, and the significance of the barn and its setting within the wider landscape; and
 - Whether the proposal would comply with development plan policies for the provision of housing within the National Park.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is a small barn and its adjacent land situated a short distance south of Hathersage within the Peak District National Park. The surrounding area is generally open countryside and the barn is visible in views along the track which passes the appeal site.
6. Paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that planning should protect and enhance valued landscapes and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Paragraph 172 indicates that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks. Paragraph 197 requires that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining this appeal.
7. The barn is simple in form with gritstone walls and a stone roof, blank gable end walls and a large arched opening on the eastern elevation. To the west there is a small forecourt area, while the eastern part of the plot is an area of grass, mud and stones which is separated from the field beyond by a post and rail fence. Internally, the barn is a single large space, and retains the historic 3-bay roof structure which is an original feature of the barn.
8. It is undisputed that the barn is likely to date from the 18th century, and it is considered by the Council to be a non-designated heritage asset. The barn's significance derives from the traditional architecture, materials and appearance which reflect its agricultural origins, and from its relationship with the landscape. Indeed, given the age of the barn, the building itself is an integral part of the wider rural landscape and contributes to the scenic beauty of its valley floor setting.
9. The barn is currently disused having previously been a workshop and more recently used for storage, although it is an attractive building and in a reasonable condition. The appellant wishes to renovate it for use as a one-bedroom dwelling, and some alterations are proposed to facilitate this. On the eastern elevation the existing arched opening would be retained and glazed. A blocked-up doorway on the same elevation would be reopened and used as a window with vertical timber boarding in the lower half and glazing above, as would the existing doorway on the western elevation. Narrow 'slot' windows would be added to the western elevation. A previous 'picking hole' on the northern elevation would be reopened and used as a window, with stone steps leading up to a new entrance doorway below.
10. While the overall form of the original building would largely be retained, and the number of new window and door openings would be limited, the proposed alterations would nonetheless lead to the barn taking on a more domestic appearance. This would be apparent whether approaching from west or east, and consequently the agricultural character and traditional appearance of the existing building, and its contribution to the rural setting, would be diminished.
11. The eastern part of the plot would be retained as a grassed area, apart from a paved strip which would run alongside the building providing access between the arched doorway and the terrace. This part of the appeal site is visually linked to the adjoining open field, and contributes to the agricultural character

and appearance of the site and the area. Although the proposal does not describe this part of the site as a garden, it seems likely to me that over time it would inevitably come to be used as such. While conditions could be imposed to restrict some forms of development which would otherwise be permitted, there would be likely to be a proliferation of domestic paraphernalia such as garden furniture which could not practically be controlled by conditions. This would detract from the barn's character and significance as a traditional agricultural building within the wider rural landscape.

12. The small forecourt area on the western side lies between the barn and the existing stone wall marking the boundary of the appeal site. This area would be used, as previously, for the parking of vehicles. The terrace which would be created at the northern end of the barn would be surrounded by repaired or reinstated stone walls of varying heights meaning that it would not be seen when approaching from the west. However, it would be visible when approaching along the track from the east. The use of both of these parts of the site would in my view be likely to be intensified as a result of the use of the barn as a dwelling. This would further accentuate the introduction of domestic activity into the landscape.
13. Internally, the proposed raising of the floor level is explained as being necessary due to the risk of flooding from the River Derwent. While it would alter the character of the interior of the barn, the use of a timber structure to achieve this would mean that the changes would be reversible, and any features of heritage interest below the existing concrete floor would be likely to be preserved. I also note that, although the existing single internal space would be subdivided, the purlins and oak trusses of the roof structure would remain in situ and visible, a factor which I consider respects the existing historic nature of the building. However, these factors do not mitigate the other harm I have identified.
14. I acknowledge that the appellant has adapted his proposals through the application process to attempt to respond to concerns raised by the Council. On balance however, and taking into account all of the evidence before me, I consider that the external alterations and the use of the barn as a dwelling would lead to the domestication of the existing building and the appeal site as a whole. This would erode its historic agricultural significance, causing harm to the character and appearance of the barn and the area. The proposal would therefore also fail to conserve and enhance the landscape, cultural heritage and scenic beauty of the National Park.
15. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1 and L3 of the 2011 Peak District Core Strategy (the CS), and Policy DMC10 of the DPD. Together these policies seek to secure the statutory purposes of the National Park and give priority to its conservation and enhancement, to protect landscape character and other valued characteristics, and to preserve the significance of heritage assets. The proposal would also conflict with the aims of Paragraph 172 of the Framework which states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

Housing policy

16. CS Policy HC1 states that new housing in the National Park will be acceptable only in specific exceptional circumstances. Two are relevant to this appeal.
17. Part A of CS Policy HC1 indicates that new housing may be acceptable where it is to meet local needs, and where it remains affordable and restricted to local occupation in perpetuity. The planning application form and supporting material provided described the development as being affordable housing to meet local housing needs. The criteria which define eligibility for such housing are set out in DPD Policies DMH1 and DMH2, and the appellant's appeal statement indicates that, although he has long-established connections with the wider National Park he does not meet the requirements set out in the development plan. The exceptions defined in CS Policy HC1 Part A therefore do not apply.
18. Part C of Policy HC1 indicates that new housing may be acceptable where it is required to achieve the conservation or enhancement of 'valued vernacular' or listed buildings, although this is also specifically linked to compliance with the requirements of CS Policies GSP1 and GSP2. The Council regards the barn as a non-designated heritage asset and agree that it falls within the definition of 'valued vernacular'. However, I have already found that the proposed development would fail to meet the requirements of CS Policy GSP1 as it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the barn and the area, and so would not accord with securing National Park purposes. For the same reasons, the harm which would be caused to the significance of the barn as a non-designated heritage asset means that the proposal would not represent an enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife, or cultural heritage of the National Park. Consequently the requirements of CS Policy GSP2 are not met.
19. The appellant indicates that it may be possible to convert the barn for use as a holiday let but that there would be greater community benefits arising from its use as a dwelling. While such a proposed use does not form part of the appeal before me, I have taken into consideration, and sympathise with, the appellant's personal circumstances. I also note the supportive representations the proposal received from several local third parties, including comments on the quality of the appellant's workmanship. However, as the proposal would not satisfy the development plan's requirements in respect either of providing local need housing, or of providing market housing when required to achieve conservation aims, the benefits arising from it would appear to be private rather than public in their nature. As such I can only give them very limited weight in my decision.
20. I therefore conclude that the proposal does not comply with CS Policy HC1, which defines the circumstances in which new housing development will be permitted within the National Park.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector