



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2020

by C Cresswell BSc (Hons) MA MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W1145/W/19/3239197

Barn at Higher Chasty, Higher Chasty, Holsworthy EX22 6NF

- 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 Luke Dunkin against the decision of Torridge District Council.
 - The application Ref 1/0332/2019/FUL, dated 8 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is change of use of barn to C3 use, together with associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are:
 - whether the site provides a suitable location for the proposed development, having particular regard to local planning policy.
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Location

3. The appeal concerns a redundant barn which is situated in the countryside near a small group of dwellings. Policy DM27 of the Local Plan¹ supports the reuse of redundant and disused rural buildings for residential purposes subject to a number of criteria being met. Of particular relevance is paragraph (c) of the policy which indicates that conversion of such buildings will only be supported where *development can be achieved without significant external alteration, extension or substantive rebuilding*.
4. A previous Appeal Decision² established that the barn, in its present form, is too small to be converted into a dwelling. It is therefore proposed to extend the building to provide space for a separate living room. The extension would increase the footprint of the building by approximately 48% according to the figures provided by the appellant.

¹ North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031

² Appeal Decision: APP/W1145/W/18/3197482

5. Even though Policy DM27 does allow converted buildings to be extended, it is made clear that any such extensions or alterations should not be significant. As the existing barn is relatively modest in size, a 48% increase in the footprint would not result in an extension of very large physical dimensions. Indeed, the appellant indicates that it would have a footprint of just over 16 m².
6. However, relative to the size of the existing barn, the extension would be more substantial. While the extension would be inset from the front and rear elevations of the barn and would have a lower ridge height, the proportions and form of the resultant dwelling would be markedly different from what exists at present. The development would therefore represent significant extension and alteration in the context of this particular building. Hence, the proposal would not comply with paragraph (c) of Policy DM27.
7. Although the appellant argues that the extension would not be considered particularly significant if it were permitted development, this is within the context of extending an existing residential unit. The purpose of Policy DM27 is to firstly establish whether the principle of converting a disused rural building into residential use is acceptable. As discussed in paragraph 13.142 of the Local Plan supporting text, this policy is part of a wider strategy which enables a limited amount of sustainable development to take place in the open countryside, but only in very specific circumstances.
8. I therefore conclude on this issue that the site would not provide a suitable location for the proposed development.

Character and appearance

9. The barn is located close to a small cluster of rural development known as Higher Chasty. This area contains a collection of dwellings and agricultural buildings which are surrounded by open farmland. Even though the barn is redundant and of no particular architectural merit, it is a small and unobtrusive feature which blends into these rural surroundings. Consequently, it helps to maintain the rural characteristics of this area.
10. The proposed development would increase the size of the barn, change its proportions and give it a domestic appearance. As a result, the converted property would bear little resemblance to an agricultural building.
11. Yet while the barn is situated in an open field, the rear elevation adjoins the road and it is situated close to other dwellings, including Chasty House Barn, opposite. From public vantage points, the converted barn would be seen mainly in the context of these nearby dwellings. Despite being extended, the barn would remain small in comparison to these dwellings and would not be a particularly prominent feature within the street scene or wider landscape. The rural characteristics of the area would be maintained.
12. I therefore conclude on this issue that the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. There would be no conflict with the design objectives of Local Plan Policies DM04 and DM25.

Conclusion

13. While the proposal would be acceptable in terms of character and appearance, this does not outweigh the conflict with Policy DM27 of the Local Plan which governs the principle of converting the building for residential use. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

C Cresswell

INSPECTOR