



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 May 2020

by I A Dyer BSc (Eng) MIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/W/19/3242035

Park Farm, Home Farm Lane, Great Brickhill MK17 9AX

- 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 Andrew & Sarah Leake against the decision of Aylesbury Vale District Council.
 - The application Ref 17/03988/APP, dated 28 September 2017, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is barn conversion and extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr & Mrs Andrew & Sarah Leake against Aylesbury Vale District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. During the course of the application the design of the proposal was amended to reflect the comments of Council officers and these were the plans upon which the Council determined the application. I have determined the appeal on the basis of the amended plans.
4. On 1 April 2020, Aylesbury Vale District Council was merged with Buckinghamshire County Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council to create Buckinghamshire Council. I have referred to Aylesbury Vale District Council as this was the determining authority at the time of the decision.
5. The draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (the Draft Local Plan) has been published but has yet to be examined and found sound. It therefore carries limited weight as a material consideration.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site lies to the north-east of the village of Great Brickhill. It is generally surrounded by open fields, but a wood lies to the north-west close to the application site. The application site is located within the Brickhills Area of Attractive Landscape. There is no dispute that the proposal lies within the countryside for planning purposes.
8. The site contains a dwelling, known as Park Farm and a group of barns associated with it. From the evidence before me the farmhouse dates from the early 18th century, whilst the barns are later structures, probably built during the 19th century. The site is largely screened from the south-west and north by existing mature planting. Similarly, the surrounding land is undulating and views from the wider countryside are limited.
9. The three main structures forming the barn group are referred to within the application documents as Barn 1, 2 and 3, and I have used this same nomenclature to identify the structures.
10. In addition to the main barn structures identified above the remains of other buildings are evident, including walls and floor slabs. These are mainly concentrated to the south of Barn 2, together with a more recently re-built brick stable.
11. All of the barns are predominantly of red brick construction with pitched slate roofs. The barns contain architectural design features of interest, including brick pillars and roof members and are considered a non-designated heritage asset in regard to Paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework - 2019- (the Framework).
12. Policy RA.11 of the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan -2004- (the Local Plan) states that: -

"Outside the built-up area of settlements, the Council endorses the conservation and re-use of buildings that are of permanent and substantial construction and generally in keeping with the rural surroundings, for non-residential purposes that fortify the rural economy.

The scale of such schemes should not conflict with the strategy of concentrating development in the main settlements.

Conversion works should not involve major reconstruction or significant extensions and should respect the character of the building and its setting.

Proposals should not give rise to other planning objections.

Permission for residential re-use is unlikely but may be granted exceptionally as part of an acceptable business conversion scheme, or where genuine attempts to secure business re-use have been unsuccessful. Any subsequent redevelopment proposals will be judged by other relevant policies in the Local Plan".

13. GP.35 of the Local Plan states: -

"The design of new development proposals should respect and complement:

- a) the physical characteristics of the site and the surroundings;

- b) the building tradition, ordering, form and materials of the locality;
 - c) the historic scale and context of the setting;
 - d) the natural qualities and features of the area; and
 - e) the effect on important public views and skylines”.
14. The Local Plan predates the Framework, however, under such circumstances policies still attract weight as material considerations, the degree of weight being proportional to the consistency of the policies with the aims of the Framework. Whilst elements of Policy RA.11 are more restrictive in regard to development of dwellings within the countryside than the approach taken within the Framework, these policies generally accord with the those aims of the Framework, including sections 2. Achieving sustainable development; 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; and 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. They therefore attract moderate weight.
15. The buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, but are currently in a state of dilapidation, notwithstanding that roof repairs have been undertaken to Barn 2. It is clear that the barn buildings have not been in active use for some time, and there is no evidence before me to suggest that the buildings are likely to return to agricultural use. It is apparent that the roofs of the barns are in poor condition and will require a significant degree of works to repair them, including replacing sections that have collapsed, if the buildings are to be returned to use. There is no dispute between the parties that the repairs will be fairly extensive.
16. The proposal would repair and convert Barns 1, 2 and 3 for use as a single dwelling, demolishing part of Barn 2 and replacing that part with a new extension. The stable and minor outbuildings would be demolished.
17. Barn 2 would be extended to the south and repaired. The construction of the extension would necessitate the removal of the remnants of the structures adjoining Barn 2 and the recently built stable.
18. The extension is of significant size, albeit that it lies within the footprint of a collapsed structure and results in the demolition of the stable. The original structure is, however, largely gone and its contribution to the built form of the group has diminished.
19. The proposed extension would be of two storeys. Whilst there would be sizeable glazed elements at ground floor level these are of similar proportion to the proposed infilling glazing proposed for the retained barns. Whilst it would be of a design incorporating features and materials seeking to reflect those of the existing buildings and give it a rustic appearance the second storey would be timber clad. The retained structures of similar scale are brick built, and the use of timber cladding for this element would appear incongruous within the group. Notwithstanding the views of the Council’s Heritage Officer, concerning the acceptability of such cladding through the treatment of the wood, the use of this material would remain at variance with the materials of the existing buildings. The new structure would be noticeable within views of the group of buildings from the east and south-east from the wider countryside and its appearance out-of-keeping in that context, albeit that these views are limited

- by the local topography. The incongruity of materials would further draw the eye to the presence of the extension.
20. The proposal would rebuild parts of the brickwork and replace the existing slate roof using similar materials. There would also be the relocation of windows, new windows, rooflights and door openings on the west and east elevation. Existing openings would be infilled with brickwork. The new openings, including those within the roof are relatively minor additions and would not fundamentally alter the building form and appearance.
 21. The existing brick columns would be retained, and the openings infilled with glazing. Whilst this would introduce sizeable areas of glazing to that façade of the barn, the size and ratio of the openings would be retained, and their original function would still be identifiable. In the circumstances, I consider this a reasonable method of acknowledging the original use of the building whilst making it weathertight for the proposed use. Further, the surrounding buildings would limit views of these windows from further afield.
 22. The proposed alterations and extensions to Barn 1 would see the removal and replacement of the existing roof, and new windows and openings inserted in the south and west elevations. The proposal would replace the existing slate roof re-using materials where possible. The new openings are relatively minor additions and would not fundamentally alter the building form and appearance.
 23. As for Barn 2, the existing brick piers would be retained, and the openings infilled with glazing. I have taken a similar view to this glazing as in the case of Barn 2 and I consider this a reasonable method of acknowledging the former function of the building whilst making it weathertight.
 24. Turning to Barn 3 remedial repairs and cosmetic alterations would be made to the structure and a link formed to Barn 2. From further afield the linking structure would be a minor element, partially concealed from longer view by the adjacent barns. The new openings on the south side of Barn 3 would be more visible, but not out of keeping with the existing structure.
 25. Bringing these matters together, whilst the works to Barns 1 and 3 would retain their existing agrarian character and appearance, the scale of the extension to Barn 2 would be significant and would not respect the character of the building and its setting. Whilst the works to the group are fairly extensive, given the scale of the dilapidation present in the buildings they are necessary if these non-designated heritage assets are to be retained.
 26. In conclusion the extension to Barn 2 would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area and would, therefore, be contrary to Policies GP.35 and RA.11 of the Local Plan in as much as these policies require, amongst other things that the proposal respect and complement the building tradition, ordering, form and materials of the locality, should not involve significant extensions and should respect the character of the building and its setting. Similarly the proposal would be contrary to those parts of the Framework that seek to conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment.
 27. The proposal would also be contrary to the advice provided in the Council's Design Guide 2 'The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings' -1990- which

advises, amongst other things, that following conversion farm buildings should be preserved in their original form without alien additions or alterations.

Other Matter

28. It has been brought to my attention that the appellant has submitted a revised application (Council Ref 19/03952/APP) which excludes the extension to the southern end of Barn 2. I have, however determined this appeal on its own merits.

Planning Balance

29. The Local Plan pre-dates the Framework and so policies within it should be assessed and given weight in terms of their consistency with the aims of the Framework. The development plan policies in relation to the supply of housing land are now out of date. In accordance with paragraph 213 of the Framework, given that they relate to housing land supply to 2011, I can only give them limited weight. As such, given that the housing supply policies are out of date (and that these must be considered to be most important in the context of a housing application even though they do not form part of the Councils reasons for refusal of the application), the provisions of paragraph 11d) of the Framework are triggered. Policies GP.35 and RA.11 of the Local Plan are, however, also important. These are broadly in accordance with the aims of the Framework and so moderate weight can be applied to them.
30. The proposal would secure the future of the non-statutory heritage asset, returning disused buildings to active use and forestalling further decay. Further, the proposal would provide benefits in terms of delivering an additional home to boost housing supply albeit that, irrespective of any shortfall in supply, a single home would only have a limited benefit. There would be minor benefits to the local economy in terms of short term employment in the construction industry and longer term support to shops and businesses.
31. The proposal would remove the more modern stable building, itself out of keeping with the rest of the group. Together these benefits carry limited weight.
32. However, I have found that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the site and the area, particularly in view of the status of the buildings as a non-designated heritage asset. This is a significant factor weighing against the scheme.
33. In conclusion the identified harm would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the limited benefits provided by the scheme when considered against development plan policies and the Framework when read as a whole.

Conclusion

34. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

I Dyer

INSPECTOR