
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 June 2020

by Nicola Davies BA DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/D/20/3245633

Lone Barn Farm, Holtye Road, East Grinstead RH19 3QF

- 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 C Dennis against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/19/3987, dated 12 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as "*proposed extension*".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the description of proposed development and address from the planning application form although I note these are expressed differently on other documents.

Main Issues

3. The main issues raised in respect of the appeal are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing building being a non-designated heritage asset and on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

4. Lone Barn Farm has been identified in the West Sussex Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Character Assessment as a historic farmstead dating from the post-medieval period. I am directed to it being an example of a modest 19th century (or earlier) farmhouse that was formerly part of an isolated historic farmstead typical of the Sussex Weald. It, therefore, has historic interest in the local context of historic farmsteads that includes the rural setting in which the former farmhouse is located. It also hosts aesthetic interest in terms of its vernacular materials. Taken collectively, the building and its rural setting is of heritage significance.
5. The proposal would involve the demolition of the existing two storey front projection and erection of a two-storey front extension as well as a two-storey side and rear extension. These would be large additions to the building. These, along with the covered walkways and pergola areas also proposed, would substantially alter the existing built form and appearance of the building.

Whilst the original modestly sized building could still be perceived, it would nonetheless become enveloped within the extensions and alterations. Its legibility as a modestly sized former farmhouse would substantially diminish as the proposal would overdevelop the original farmhouse building and much of its architectural character would become less decipherable. This would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the building, as well as its special interest.

6. Furthermore, the changed appearance of the former farmhouse would significantly alter how the building would be experienced within its rural setting. Those characteristics of its historic farmstead past that give it a sense of place within the Sussex Weald rural landscape would also be substantially diminished.
7. I acknowledge that the existing white timber cladding would be replaced by hanging tiles that would match the original building and that it is intended to use a pallet of high quality building materials within the proposed scheme. Moving the two-storey front extension further south would expose more of the original front elevation and the creation of a timber porch could make the entrance more legible when viewed from the main access from the north. These are benefits of the proposed scheme when considered individually. However, they would not overcome the harm that would result from the overdevelopment of the original farmhouse building.
8. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that the effect of a proposed development on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. In this case I consider the proposed extensions and alterations to the building would be substantially harmful to this non-designated heritage asset and its significance. I do not consider that landscaping, either within or around the perimeter of the site, would be sufficient to overcome my above concerns.
9. The Framework also indicates that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The proposed extensions and alterations would have a negative visual impact upon the existing building and, as such, would be visually harmful to the AONB landscape. The property sits in a low plane within the countryside and is largely surrounded by woodland, as the photographs provided by the appellant show. This restricts its visibility in views from the wider AONB landscape and Holtye Road. Nonetheless, from a public right of way and the access track the property is clearly visible at the end of its driveway. The visual harm would, therefore, be apparent in public views, although I accept this would be localised to those views from the public right of way and the track. Nonetheless, the proposal would result in a perceivable visual harm to the AONB landscape.
10. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing property being a non-designated heritage asset and to the High Weald AONB. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policies DP12, DP26 and DP34 of the Mid

Sussex District Plan 2018 and Policies EG1, EG2, EG3 and EG4 of the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan 2016. These policies seek, amongst other matters, to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the character and quality of life of the District and to conserve and enhance the natural and scenic beauty of the High Weald AONB landscape. This reflects the objectives set out in the Framework and with which the proposal would also conflict.

Other matters

11. I acknowledge that the property has benefited from a previous planning permission that would have allowed extensions and alterations of a similar scale and nature to those proposed within the scheme before me. However, that permission has lapsed. I note that previous permission pre-dates the adoption of both the District and Neighbourhood Plans and that proposal would have been considered against the policy context that was in place at that time. The proposal before me can and should be considered against the current development plan policies.
12. The proposed extensions would meet the needs of the current occupiers and enable them to continue living at the property as a single family. The design would comply with Building Regulations Part Q and internally would retain the existing timber framing. The proposal would also incorporate features within the scheme that would be favourable to wildlife. I note also that the proposal would not impact upon the living conditions of existing neighbouring occupiers. Although these would be merits of the scheme, they do not overcome my above concerns or justify the proposed development.

Conclusion

13. Having regard to the above findings, the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicola Davies

INSPECTOR