The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 July 2020

by A Blicq BSc (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M949600/W/20/3246020
Barn adjacent to Dale Cottages, Bradford, Youlgreave DE43 1WG

- 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 Garratt, of FH Garatt and Sons against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
- The application Ref NP/DDD/0719/0759, dated 12 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 October 2019.
- The development proposed is change of use of barn into 2 bed holiday accommodation including new track. Demolition of existing 'extension'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (England) Act 1990 (the Act) confers on the decision maker a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. As such, although the Peak Park National Planning Authority (the Authority) has found not harm to the conservation area in its decision, I have considered it appropriate to consider this in my reasoning. As this has been raised by the parish council at application stage, I am satisfied that the main parties would not be prejudiced by this approach.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:

   - Whether the barn's conversion would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Youlgreave Conservation Area (YCA); and,

   - Whether it would accord with local policies with regard to the conversion of buildings to holiday accommodation.

Reasons

Heritage Asset

4. The barn is located within an elevated open meadow on the southern edge of Youlgreave and is seen in the context of a short residential terrace to its east, and a bank of mature trees to the rear. I noticed that it is located a short distance from what appears to be the village's historic core. This has an irregular building pattern of period stone structures clustered around a

crossroads and the church. There is also a significant and tightly arranged block of stone dwellings to the meadow's south-east, hard against Stoneyside.

5. The barn itself (extension excepted) has stone quoins and dressed stone blocks around the entrance. The poorly pointed walls indicate coursed random rubble construction. The barn's design and materials suggest simple rural vernacular architecture of a form and typology readily seen in buildings in the area.

6. Both parties refer to the building as a barn. However, apart from the rickety side extension its appearance, and door and window openings, are indicative of a simple period stone cottage. However, there is nothing before me to suggest that there has been former residential use or domestication of the field within which the barn sits.

7. The YCA Conservation Appraisal (appraisal) states that the distinctive character of Youlgreave is not solely derived from buildings. The field within which the barn sits is part of an extensive area designated as Important Open Green Space, which extends across much of the south facing hillside below the village core. This expansive open space provides a distinct and striking counterpoint to the nearby blocks of small dwellings, and enables long views to the other side of the valley.

8. There is a sharp contrast between the open agricultural land which dominates the landscape, and the groups of huddled stone dwellings. Even where nearby dwellings have gardens they are tightly enclosed with stone walling. Agricultural land use extends deep into the village's building pattern and gives Youlgreave a distinctive appearance. My reasoning in this regard is reinforced by the aerial photograph on the planning and heritage statement which shows what appears to be evidence of hay mowing on the appeal site.

9. The appraisal states that enclosed fields and other green space make an important contribution to the YCA's historic and aesthetic qualities and I see no reason to disagree with this assessment. The meadow within which the barn sits reinforces this key characteristic of the YCA.

10. The significance of the YCA is therefore derived from its historic fabric, and the layout and spatial relationship between rural and residential land.

11. From Bradford Road the barn and its agricultural setting are highly prominent. It makes a positive contribution to the visual amenity and character of the area through its simple form and use of materials, which is consistent with other buildings in the area.

12. The barn's conversion would necessarily introduce domestic paraphernalia, including parked cars, and other features associated with habitation such as washing lines, garden furniture and bins, in its immediate vicinity. Even if vehicles are parked to the side on reinforced mesh as suggested, and it has a stone access road, it would be difficult to disguise residential use. Given the impressive south facing outlook I am not satisfied that sitting out would be confined to the small paved area to the eastern side of the barn as suggested.

13. Consequently, the barn's residential use would be very visible and this would dilute the distinctive juxtaposition of rural and residential land uses. I am unable to see what conditions could be imposed to mitigate the visual impact of domestic paraphernalia or to limit its extent. If the barn was in agricultural use

and had a well-established access road, vehicles and other objects left in the barn's vicinity would be agricultural.

14. The apparent domestication of the barn would diminish the spatial relationship between the village and surrounding countryside, and would neither preserve nor enhance the YCA. This would be detrimental to the significance of the YCA, and would represent less than substantial harm as set out in Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Where there is less than substantial harm the Framework requires that such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing where appropriate its optimum viable use.

15. I appreciate that the barn itself has no heritage significance apart from its form and use of materials. However, it seems that this could apply to very many buildings within the Peak Park which display a vernacular style and stone construction. It does not necessarily follow that such buildings should be readily allowed to fall into extreme disrepair or to disappear entirely from the landscape.

16. However, the public benefits arising from the barn's restoration have to be balanced against the adverse effect of that restoration on the YCA arising from the domestication of such a prominent meadow. The barn's restoration would constitute a small addition to the provision of self-catering accommodation. However, there is nothing before me to suggest that Youlgreave has insufficient holiday accommodation. Consequently, I am unable to conclude that the barn restoration and conversion is of such public benefit that it would outweigh the harm to the YCA.

17. I have considered whether the imposition of conditions could overcome my concern in relation to the development's impact on the YCA, but have concluded that such works would change the nature of the application. In any case, none have been suggested by either of the parties.

18. I conclude that the development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the YCA which would be contrary to Section 72 of the Act. It would also fail to accord with Section 16 of the Framework with regard to heritage assets.

Principle of Conversion

19. Policy RT2 of the Core Strategy (CS) states that change of use proposals for self-catering accommodation must be linked to a traditional building of historic or vernacular merit.

20. The Authority advances the argument that there is no map evidence of the building until the 20th century and that it is not a non-designated heritage asset. However, even a 20th century building could be more than 100 years old and there is nothing in CS Policy RT2 which excludes the consideration of 20th century buildings.

21. The barn's lack of proven age, or particular features or detail does not in any way detract from its inherent value or the contribution it makes to the landscape. Moreover, given the evident care taken in its construction, evidenced by the use of dressed stone, I disagree that it is necessarily of low value or that its loss would be of no detriment to the special qualities of the national park. I noticed other period buildings nearby which had very similar

construction, materials and features. Its appearance seems consistent with other stone buildings in the village and with descriptions of vernacular building set out in the Design Guide[1]. This is supported by the Authority's pre-application opinion which states that the barn has some traditional characteristics in terms of massing, materials and details[2].

22. The proposed alterations to the barn appearance would be appropriate and sympathetic to the underlying architecture. They would not significantly alter its appearance, particularly when viewed from a distance.

23. However, CS Policy RT2 is also concerned with the landscape impact of a converted building in open countryside. Although this site is arguably not within open countryside, it is open land which appears to be current or former agricultural use. As such, I conclude that it falls within open countryside for planning purposes. My concern is the barn's immediate setting and the prominence and importance of that setting within the YCA, and I have outlined above my reasoning in this regard.

24. Consequently, I conclude that the development would be contrary to CS Policy RT2, as outlined above. The Authority has also cited Policy DMC10 of the Local Plan[3] but this is concerned with the conversion of heritage assets. As the barn is not a heritage asset, this policy weighs neither for nor against the appeal.

25. I acknowledge that pre-application discussion suggested that the authority did not object to the principle of conversion. Nonetheless, this was given as a reason for refusal. Other arguments have been advanced but none carry sufficient weight to alter my reasoning.

Conclusion

26. In the light of the above I conclude that the development would fail to comply with the Act, relevant policies of the Local Plan, or national guidance. The appeal should be dismissed.

A Blicq

INSPECTOR

[1] Peak District National Park Authority Design Guide 2007
[2] Email 8 May 2019
[3] Peak District National Park Development Management Policies, May 2019