The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 August 2020

by David Spencer BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/D/19/3237788
Sheldon, 2 Stoney Lane, Barrow, Bury St Edmunds IP29 5DD

- 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 C W Smith against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
- The application Ref DC/19/1338/HH, dated 25 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 August 2019.
- The development proposed is erection of detached garage and residential annexe building.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are firstly, the effect of the proposed building on the character and appearance on the surrounding area, and secondly, whether the proposed use would be appropriately related to the host dwelling.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is situated at the edge of the village of Barrow. At present No.2 Stoney Lane is the end dwelling on the northern side of the lane although it is material that an additional dwelling to the east of No.2 and ancillary garaging behind including a detached garage building on the site of the appeal proposal have already been established[1]. The new dwelling and garaging would be served by a new vehicular access introduced immediately to the south of No.2. Consequently, the character of where Stoney Lane currently transitions from the housing of Barrow to the countryside to the east would change. The appeal proposal should be considered in this context.

4. There is variety to the style and size of housing in Stoney Lane but an evident characteristic is a reasonably consistent development pattern along the northern side of Stoney Lane. There is no perception of development behind this building line and views between buildings afford glimpses of open gardens and countryside beyond, reinforcing the edge of village location. Notwithstanding the approved garage building the appeal proposal by virtue of its height and massing would introduce an uncharacteristic bulk of development at depth at this rural edge of Barrow.

[1] The submitted plans show that approved under reference DC/16/0001/FUL (subsequently DC/18/2395).

5. In terms of its visual impact, the upper parts of the annexe building would be conspicuous above the ridge line of No.2 in views from the west on Stoney Lane, in a gap between the conifers. Due to the proposed position of the annexe and the extensive degree of separation, the building would not appear as a coherent continuation of, or have a strong visual interrelationship with, the terrace of two storey cottages to the west. Whilst the approved adjacent dwelling would introduce two storey development it would do so in a way consistent with the strong linear single depth building line along this part of Stoney Lane and within the extant settlement boundary for Barrow. In contrast the appeal proposal because of its scale, massing and design would be seen and readily interpreted, particularly from the proposed new access onto Stoney Lane, as an uncharacteristic 'backland' dwelling. In contrast to the more modest ancillary scale and appearance of the approved garages it would harmfully erode the clear delineation between settlement and countryside at this peripheral location.

6. The appellant submits that the annexe is the minimum accommodation necessary to meets its purpose. Nonetheless, by providing a complete range of self-contained accommodation at a first-floor level above a large ground floor dual garage, the result would be a sizeable two-storey building extending to a ridge of nearly 9 metres. There is no persuasive evidence as to why the annexe accommodation needs to be incorporated into such a bulky detached building within a wider garden/smallholding plot which is part of the countryside character beyond an identifiable and logical settlement boundary.

7. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would be contrary to criterion (f) of Policy DM24 of the Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Local Plan Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015 (the JDMPD) which requires, amongst other things, that annexe buildings are of a scale, location and design that relates satisfactorily to the wider surrounding area. It would also be contrary to Policy DM2 of the JDMPD which requires all development to, amongst other things, maintain or create a sense of place and/or local character and to not adversely affect the prevailing pattern of development. In this regard Policies DM2 and DM24 are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 127 which seeks to ensure that all developments add to the overall quality of the area, maintain a strong sense of place and are sympathetic to local character.

Integration with the existing dwelling

8. The appeal proposal would involve a stand-alone building reasonably separated from the rear of the host dwelling by a good-sized garden area. The building would contain a range of facilities for independent living (kitchen, space for eating, lounge, bathroom and bedroom). There would be plentiful private amenity space around both the host dwelling and the proposed annexe. Accordingly, it is difficult to see that there would be any meaningful dependence or connection with the original dwelling. Given the degree of physical and functional separation the proposed annexe would not be capable of being reasonably integrated into the use of the host dwelling once the need for the annexe has ceased. Consequently, the appeal proposal would be contrary to criterion d) Policy DM24 of the JDMPD.

9. In assessing the weight to be given to this policy conflict the annexe would be situated at the edge of the village of Barrow, a large key service centre village, where some growth is envisaged. Future occupants would not be isolated. As such I do not find the creation of a self-contained annexe at the appeal location, were it to evolve into a separate accommodation because of its poor integration with the host dwelling, would be unsustainably located. Whilst this moderately reduces the weight of the policy conflict with DM24(d), I nonetheless consider that ensuring good integration with the existing dwelling is also about reducing the proliferation of development in the countryside, so that its intrinsic character is protected.

10. I note the appeal site has consent for an ancillary garage building, but I do not find this comprises sufficient justification in terms of either functionality or integration for locating a self-contained annexe some distance from the host dwelling in the countryside. As set out above, the scale and overtly residential massing and appearance of the proposed appeal building would be significantly harmful to semi-rural character in this peripheral part of Barrow. Accordingly, despite the sustainable location, I still attach appreciable weight on character grounds to the policy conflict with DM24(d) due to the poor assimilation with the host dwelling. The appellant's submissions on functional integration in terms of a tourist accommodation use in the long term and the imposition of an occupancy condition as required by Policy DM24 do not overcome my concerns on the harm to the local character arising from the limited relationship to the existing dwelling.

Conclusion and planning balance

11. Whilst I have given moderately reduced weight to the policy conflict with JDMPD Policy DM24(d) due to the broadly sustainable location this does not outweigh the residual weight of conflict with Policy DM24(d) in terms of the harm to local character and the full weight of conflict with Policies DM2 and DM24(f) on the same grounds. Accordingly, the proposal would conflict with up-to-date relevant policies of the development plan most important for determining the application. The approved development at the appeal site is a notable material consideration but the for the reasons set out above, the appeal proposal would be materially different in scale and appearance, with consequently significantly harmful effects on the local character. Accordingly, there are not the material considerations that indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

David Spencer

Inspector.