
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2020

by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 November 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/E2205/W/20/3246642

Bowerland Oast, Bowerland Farm, Bowerland Lane, Chilham, Kent CT4 8ED

- 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 Miss Jenna Wills against the decision of Ashford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01466/AS, dated 15 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 10 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Construction of single storey side extension'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property probably dates from the 19th Century and encompasses a square roundel and rectangular stowage. It was originally an oast house but is now a dwelling. The conversion has retained the historic form, which is still clearly discernible and can be appreciated from a public footpath along the site frontage. The building is prominent in views from the footpath and is a focal point in the vista along the driveway. The appeal property therefore contributes positively to the heritage and local landscape character of the area, being a locally distinctive building that has broadly retained its original agricultural charm.
4. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes 7 and 10 'The Reuse of Agricultural Buildings' and 'Domestic Extensions in Urban and Rural Areas' state that extensions or alterations to traditional rural buildings should not harm their historic character or form and should express a coherent design. I have not been directed to any reference in the SPGs stating that extensions to former agricultural buildings are unacceptable as a matter of principle. Similarly, guidance¹ prepared by Historic England does not rule out extensions to historic farm buildings in principle, but explains that overly domestic extensions would appear alien in such a context.
5. With the above in mind, the appeal scheme would, by some way, appear subservient to the existing building and it would be possible to secure matching

¹ The Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings: A guide to good practice (2006)

materials through a suitably worded planning condition. Thus, aspects of the proposal would respond to the character and appearance of the host building.

6. However, the appeal scheme would have several clumsy details including a rear elevation that would project past that of the existing. This would result in a wide gable span and a plan form that would jar with the rectilinear shape of the stowage. In addition, the extension would have a shallower roof pitch, a flush front elevation and an alien window style (due to an arch and smaller proportions). The roof lights on the front roof slope would also be prominent, overly domestic in appearance and reduce the solidity of the addition. Accordingly, the extension would be poorly proportioned and detailed and thus jar with the host property when viewed from the footpath.
7. In conclusion, when taken as a whole the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be at odds with Policies SP1, SP6, ENV3a and HOU8 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted February 2019), which seek to secure development that is of a high quality of design which responds positively to design guidance, has particular regard to the design of vernacular buildings and landscape features and does not result in overall harm to the character and appearance of the area. These policies are consistent with Paragraphs 124 and 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore carry full weight in my assessment of the proposal.

Other Matters

8. There would be some economic benefits to the construction industry from implementing the appeal scheme and the proposal would improve the living conditions of the property by creating extra space. However, the economic benefits would be modest and the existing living conditions are not substandard. Accordingly, these benefits would not outweigh the harm that would occur and the subsequent conflict with the local plan.
9. The extension would occupy the position of a demolished structure, but as there is no visible signs of it above ground this is not a strong point in favour of allowing the harm that would otherwise occur.
10. The appellant has referred to several approved developments but some of these appear to predate the current local plan or relate to different sites and developments. None of the examples are for similar extensions to a similar historic oast house. In this instance the acceptability of the appeal scheme turns on a discrete assessment of its impacts on the unique character of the host building and its immediate context. As such, the other schemes referred to are of limited relevance and do not indicate that a decision to dismiss the appeal would be inconsistent with the approval of other developments nearby.

Conclusion

11. The proposed development would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeal should not succeed.

Graham Chamberlain
INSPECTOR