



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 July 2021 by A Coombes

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D0121/D/21/3274304

Site Address Old Barton, Chelvey Road, Chelvey, North Somerset BS48 4AD

- 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 A Bailey against the decision of North Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 20/P/2988/FUH, dated 30 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 16 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is first floor side extension and single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the building and wider area; and
 - the living conditions of the occupiers of Old Field House, with regard to overlooking from the proposed balcony.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site is a former agricultural building located in a rural setting between Chelvey and West Town. The area is sparsely developed and defined by open pastoral fields. Though there is no current agricultural link to the farm that the building was once part of, the site positively contributes to the rural character of the area. The traditional stone building is detached and sits within a modest plot with one immediately neighbouring dwelling, Old Field House. Planning permission was previously granted to convert and extend the agricultural building to a residential dwelling. This was carried out in a style sympathetic to the shape and scale of the original building allowing the original structure to still largely be appreciated. The proposal seeks permission for a first floor side extension, above the previously permitted extension, as well as a single storey rear extension replacing an existing smaller extension, which would host a balcony at first floor level.

Character and Appearance

5. Despite being set back from the front of the building, the proposed side extension would see the existing extension meet the original building in height, reduce the prominence of the roof pitch of the original barn, and alter the overall shape of the building. A wide gable would be introduced on the West side elevation. This would, not only dominate public views when approaching along the highway, but would appear bulky and not be subservient to the original building. The rear roof pitch would be altered to introduce an 'M' shape, which would further detract from the original roof form. Although matching materials have been proposed, the cumulative effect of the amendments at first-floor level would be detrimental to the character of both the building and the area.
6. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing sunroom and introduce a rear extension that would stretch across most of the width of the dwelling and incorporate a balcony at first floor level. Due to its size, the rear extension would hide the traditional features of the original barn at ground-floor level. Furthermore, balconies do not form part of the character of the area and therefore the introduction of one would not be in keeping with the rural setting. As a result, the rear extension would further emphasise the harm caused by the side extension.
7. The walls of the rear extension would be rendered, and the balcony would have a glazed balustrade. Though it was noted that there are examples of rendered properties nearby, the rear extension would not integrate with the natural stone, which has been used for both the original building and the subsequent side extension. Therefore, although not visible from the public domain, due to its size, use of materials and incorporation of a balcony, the rear extension would have a detrimental impact on the character of the building.
8. Policy DM45 of the North Somerset Council Development Management Policies, Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 (DMP), adopted 2016, states that "any extension as part of the conversion or subsequently should not be disproportionate to the original building and respect the scale and character of the building and its setting." By virtue of its design, shape and scale the proposed development would contravene this Policy.
9. For the reasons given above, the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the building and the wider area. It would not accord with Policy DM45 of the DMP, which seeks to protect rural buildings during conversion and subsequent development. Furthermore, the proposal would not accord with Policies DM32 and DM38 of the DMP and Policy CS12 of the North Somerset Council Core Strategy, adopted 2017, all of which seek to ensure the high-quality design of buildings and extensions including in terms of massing, scale, overall design and character.

Living Conditions

10. The appeal building is located close to the site boundary with one neighbouring property, Old Field House, to the east. Due to the siting of the rear extension, the proposed balcony would be close to the boundary. As a result, there would be a significant degree of overlooking into the curtilage of Old Field House. On the site visit it was observed that the balcony would also allow views into several windows on the neighbouring property, although the windows appeared to primarily service a conservatory. Balconies and the resulting overlooking are

not characteristic of this rural area and therefore such a reduction in privacy would be harmful in this circumstance.

11. The appellant has suggested fitting a tall opaque screen as part of the balustrade to reduce visibility on the eastern side of the boundary. This would limit direct views towards Old Field House. However, due to the design of the balcony and its stepped side elevation, the screening would also need to be staggered to be effective. This would cause the balcony to have a more obtrusive character than the lower balustrade thus further exacerbating the harm. Therefore, this is not considered to be an appropriate solution.
12. For the reasons given above, the proposed balcony would be detrimental to the living conditions of the occupiers of Old Field House due to overlooking and loss of privacy. The proposal would not accord with Policies DM32 and DM38 of the DMP. Together these Policies ensure that development does not prejudice the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

Other Matters

13. It is understood that the appellant has expanding accommodation needs and, due to the plot width, there may be limited scope for extending the property. The site is not within the Green Belt, the National Planning Policy Framework notes that rural housing can contribute to meeting the demand for overall housing provision and the Parish Council have raised no objection to this application. However, the proposal must be considered on its merits, having regard to the development plan including the policies relevant to extensions to converted buildings.
14. The development would comply with certain aspects of the relevant policies, such as the parking standards and the retention of sufficient amenity space, but this is a neutral matter in considering the proposal. The cumulative bulk of the proposed development and the loss of character of the original building would cause significant harm. This would not be outweighed by the personal circumstances of the appellant or the absence of objection from the Parish Council.
15. Examples have been provided of other barn conversions in the local area, including associated extensions. Barn conversions are typically unique in their design and constraints and whether an extension is appropriate is highly sensitive to the particular site circumstances. Therefore, although these sites have been considered, limited weight can be given to them, and they do not indicate that this scheme is acceptable.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. The proposal would not accord with the Development Plan when it is considered as a whole. For the reasons given above, I recommend the appeal should be dismissed.

A Coombes

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR