

Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 22 June 2021

by Mr Martin Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/21/3268363

Royal Berks Shooting School, Tomb Farm, Ashampstead, READING, RG8 8SD

- 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 Royal Berkshire Shooting School against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02669/FUL, dated 9 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 15 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as a 6.5m extension to eastern elevation with four velux windows in roof to facilitate internal reconfiguration to provide 3no. offices and ablutions; 10m orangery extension to western elevation with four skylights and to provide a function room and storage; insertion of four velux windows in roof on southern and northern elevations (resubmission of 19/01913/FUL).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Since the appeal was submitted the Government has published a new National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Comments were sought from the Council and the Appellant. As the main parties have had the opportunity to provide comments no injustice has been caused. I have considered the appeal on the basis of the revised Framework.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the area and the host building, bearing in mind the location within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB) and the setting of the adjacent Tomb Farm House, a Grade II listed building.

Reasons

4. The appeal building comprises a single storey structure, which has the appearance and form of a former agricultural building, with stone walling detailed with brick, under a tiled roof. The building has an L-shaped form further reinforcing its appearance as a subservient and traditional building at this location. The appeal site sits within a distinctly rural context, with undulating topography; in this context the existing building appears sympathetic to the attractive surrounding countryside.
5. The proposed extensions however would result in a markedly more bulky and substantial building, adding sizeable additions to two elevations, one of which is visible on the approach to the site along the vehicular access. As a result, the

building as a large, overly dominant structure at this location, would appear as an insensitive and discordant element within the immediate rolling countryside, a defining feature of the AONB at this position.

6. Moreover, the existing building is an attractive structure with an appearance that imparts a former agricultural use, both in terms of its individual design and the subservient relationship with the nearby farmhouse. The proposed extensions would erode the buildings current appearance and it would be subsumed within the overly bulky and cumbersome extensions. In particular, the use of extensive flat roofed areas would be unsympathetic elements of the rear extension. The proposals would subsequently negatively alter both the character and appearance of the existing structure, through the loss of its modest scale and extent.
7. Close to the appeal building is Tomb Farm House, a Grade II listed building which comprises part of the complex of buildings at the site. Its significance, as a designated heritage asset lies, in part, in its positioning within the site, occupying a focal location with subservient buildings nearby within its setting. The proposed increase in the size of the appeal building would degrade its level of subservience to the listed building. As a consequence of the increase in bulk, the resultant building would compete for visual dominance with the farmhouse. Hence, the appeal scheme would be injurious to, and harmfully detract from, the assets' significance.
8. Thus, the proposal would conflict with policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy, insofar as they seek to ensure that development respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area, as well as that the setting of heritage assets is conserved.
9. In causing harm to the setting of the listed building, I find that the scheme would result in less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. As required by paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework, I have had regard to any public benefits of the proposed development, which includes the provision of new improved facilities at the site, with associated economic benefits. However, any such benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Other Matters

10. I have had regard to the previous appeal decision on this site, where the Inspector in that case found that a marquee would have no significant effect on the character and appearance of the area, nor the setting of the listed building. However, that related to the temporary siting of the marquee at a location different to that in the case of the scheme before me. There are thus clear differences between the schemes and the findings in that previous case do not alter my finding of harm above.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR