



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2021

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 November 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/U1430/D/21/3280347

Bexhurst Oast, Merriments Lane, Hurst Green, Etchingham TN19 7RA

- 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 Jackson against the decision of Rother District Council.
 - The application Ref RR/2021/457/P, dated 26 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is a garden room extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing oasthouse building and its significance in the countryside within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The proposal is for the addition of a single storey garden room or conservatory, about 3.7 m x 4.3 m in size, to the roundel of Bexhurst Oast, a converted oasthouse now in residential use. The detached property comprises a single roundel attached to a rectangular former stowage barn and is sited within extensive grounds. Together with a few other dwellings located down a private lane, the site lies well outside any defined settlement boundary and within attractive countryside designated as part of the High Weald AONB.
4. The oasthouse is a former agricultural building of traditional, vernacular design. Although not listed, and the residential conversion inevitably involved some unsympathetic alterations and additions, the overall form and appearance of the building has been retained and it remains characteristic of its type and the hop growing tradition of the High Weald. As such the building can be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset which makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
5. However, the proposed garden room/conservatory, of large glass panels with a shallow pitch clay tile roof, would be located adjacent to the brick-built roundel, attached by a short glass link to the existing doorway. This would involve the juxtaposition of an overtly modern, rectangular structure of contrasting transparent materials with the traditional, circular, brick-built roundel which is

the principal and most distinctive component of the oasthouse. Whilst glazed additions to converted farm buildings are sometimes appropriate, in this case the result would be a jarring, unsympathetic appendage projecting out from the original building, undermining its traditional character.

6. Although located on the private side of the property, away from the lane with its public right of way and thus screened from public view, by detracting from the visual integrity of the oasthouse building, a traditional feature of the High Weald landscape, the proposal would erode its significance and thus harm the character and appearance of the rural area.
7. For these reasons the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the existing oasthouse to the detriment of its significance as a traditional vernacular farm building in the countryside within the High Weald AONB. This would conflict with Policies EN1, EN3, OSS4iii, RA3iv,v and RA4ii,iii of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 together with Policies DHG9ii,v,vi, DEN1 and DEN2 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan 2019. These require such extensions to be of high design quality, to understand the significance of the building, to retain the legibility, form as a specific building typology and agricultural character of traditional historic farm buildings, to maintain their contribution to the wider rural landscape and to protect the distinctive landscape character of the locality, in this case part of the High Weald AONB. Paragraph 12.77 of the Core Strategy observes that converted farm buildings are vulnerable to inappropriate alteration that would have an adverse impact on the intrinsic character of the building, with even a well-designed extension usually undermining the form of a barn or oasthouse as an example of a particular building typology. The High Weald AONB Management Plan also identifies oasthouses as both locally distinctive and nationally important features that should be protected.

Other Matters

8. The rectangular stowage barn element of the building has been extended as part of the residential conversion, but this is at the far end away from the roundel. The existing windows in the property are relatively small, restricting views out, but this is the inevitable corollary of a sympathetic agricultural building conversion and does not in itself justify a garden room. Whilst the roundel structure would not be altered physically and the extension could be removed at the end of its life, it would be in place for many years and once erected a replacement would be likely.

Conclusion

9. The garden room would provide additional living accommodation for the property and offer wide views of its surroundings, enhancing the enjoyment of the dwelling by its occupiers. It is also appreciated that there were no local objections to the proposal. However, these material considerations are not sufficient to outweigh the conclusions with regard to the main issue and the resulting conflict with the development plan.
10. Having regard to the above the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR