



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 November 2021

by F Rafiq BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/A0665/W/21/3279008

Flash Farm, Flash Lane, Antrobus, Northwich CW9 6JX

- 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 P Eyes against the decision of Cheshire West and Chester Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00499/FUL, dated 3 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 5 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as a 'barn conversion to dwelling with single storey extension'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in July 2021 (the Framework). Whilst the paragraph numbers have changed in regard to those relevant to the main issues of this case, the substance thereof remains the same as the 2019 iteration. I have had regard to the revised Framework in this decision.

Main Issues

3. The appeal site is situated within the Green Belt. The Council do not however consider the proposal would constitute inappropriate development and I consider the main issues are:
 - (a) whether the existing building's physical form is capable of conversion to facilitate the proposal; and
 - (b) if so, the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing building and the area.

Reasons

Conversion

4. The appeal building, an original agricultural barn, has been granted an extant permission to convert to a dwelling¹. The Council reference a structural survey undertaken in September 2020 which demonstrated that only limited works were required for the conversion to a residential use to take place in adherence with Building Regulations. I have not been made aware of any changes in the

¹ LPA Ref 20/03684/FUL

condition of the building since that structural survey was undertaken. The current scheme seeks to convert the building to a residential use but along with a single storey extension.

5. The Council have raised concerns that the extension would necessitate the removal of a large section of the existing external wall. The removal of external walling, other than small window and door openings would be limited to part of one elevation of the appeal building. The width of the extension, where sections of existing wall would be removed to link it to the existing building, would be less than half the overall width of the south-western elevation of the appeal building. The proposal would also be single storey and sit below the eaves of the existing building, with an appreciable section of wall remaining above the extension. Given this, and that there are a number of openings already in that section of the wall where the extension is proposed, I do not consider the proposal would involve major reconstruction.
6. To conclude, the proposal has demonstrated that the existing building is capable of being converted to facilitate the proposal. As such, it would not conflict with Policy STRAT 9 of the Cheshire West & Chester Council Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (LP Part One) or with Policy DM 22 of the Cheshire West & Chester Council Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies (LP Part Two), which seek, amongst other matters the reuse of existing rural buildings where they are of permanent construction and can be reused without major reconstruction. There would also not be conflict with the Framework in this regard.

Character and Appearance

7. The appeal barn is located amongst a group of buildings off Flash Lane. A farmhouse building is situated a short distance to the north-east of the appeal site and has a traditional form, like the appeal property. This group of buildings are surrounded by open fields, which are bounded by hedges and trees. These features, and the generally flat topography which afford views of the surrounding countryside, contribute to the rural character and appearance of the area.
8. The appeal building has a simple rectangular form with its gable end facing the road. The extension proposed, although of a limited size in comparison with the whole of the existing building, would nonetheless be quite substantial in its floor area and jut out part way along the south-western elevation. I appreciate that it has been reduced in size from a previous scheme and note that it is common for agricultural buildings to be extended. However, in this instance, the siting and projection of the extension would be out of keeping with the simple, rectangular form of the existing building. The south-western elevation of the building is clearly seen along Flash Lane in the section towards Nook Lane. The harm the proposal would have on the agricultural character of the building, would also be harmful to the wider rural landscape.
9. To conclude therefore on this issue, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing building and the area. As such, it would conflict with LP Part One Policy ENV 6 and LP Part Two Policy DM3, which seek, amongst other matters, high quality design that respects local character. It would also be contrary to Paragraph 130 of the Framework, which seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character, the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

Other Matters

10. The appeal scheme would provide a larger family dwelling. I attach some weight to this matter, but it would not outweigh the harm that I have found in relation to character and appearance.
11. The extension would not harm the openness of the Green Belt, but this is a neutral consideration and not one which weighs in favour of the development.

Conclusion

12. I have found that the proposal would be acceptable in relation to the existing building being capable of conversion to facilitate the proposed use. However, this is a neutral factor and does not outweigh the harm that the proposed extension to it would have on its character and appearance or that of the local area as a whole.
13. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework and all other relevant material considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

F Rafiq

INSPECTOR