The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 December 2021 by G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3425/D/21/3278715
Bracken Barn, Long Lane, Stafford ST18 9PA

- 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 Mrs Lesley Jane Brain against the decision of Stafford Borough Council.
- The application Ref 20/33273/HOU, dated 21 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2021.
- The development proposed is replacement of windows and doors with UPVC.

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.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Government published on 20 July 2021 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The main parties have had opportunity to submit representations on the revised Framework and no comments were received.

4. I have used the description of development taken from the decision notice which was also used in the appeal form as this more accurately reflects the development proposed.

Main Issue

5. The effect of the proposal on the appearance of the dwelling and the area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. Bracken Barn and the dwelling to the rear of it are converted farm buildings similar in appearance, which appear to have formerly been part of the same farmstead. The siting of the two dwellings close to each other and their shared architectural and window details gives them a consistent and complementary appearance which positively contributes to the appearance of both dwellings and means they are still appreciated as being part of the original grouping of farm buildings.

7. The windows and doors across both barn conversions are of timber construction in a mahogany colour and are currently very similar in appearance. The proposal would replace the windows and doors in Bracken Barn with uPVC units. Whilst brochures for the type of windows proposed have been submitted, the detailed specifications of the windows have not been provided, such as cross sections, reveals and profile.

8. It is important to understand the detailed design of the uPVC windows and doors at this stage, as uPVC can have a very different appearance to timber such as wider frames. Unsuitable windows could unduly domesticate this converted agricultural building and fail to conserve the traditional agricultural form that has been retained through its conversion and which contributes significantly to its appearance. There is insufficient information before me to demonstrate that what is proposed would be consistent with the existing windows and doors in terms of dimensions, design and appearance. Therefore, the limited detail submitted with the appeal does not provide me with certainty that the proposed windows and doors would conserve this agricultural appearance.

9. The application sought permission to replace the windows and doors with windows in 'Irish Oak' colour, however samples of an 'Anteak' colour have also been provided. Both would be much lighter colours than the existing and would contrast sharply with the dark windows of the other dwelling, harming the appearance of this pair of dwellings and their contribution to the local area.

10. The appellant now states in their Grounds of Appeal that they would accept mahogany coloured windows and doors. This would potentially more closely match the existing windows and doors on both properties, however, the product brochures submitted do not include this colour option. Therefore, I cannot be certain that the appellant's proposal could be achieved with the specific types of windows and doors proposed.

11. Whilst in some circumstances these details could be secured through planning conditions, in this case such a condition would not be reasonable as it has not been demonstrated that an acceptable combination of window detailing and colour can be achieved within the product ranges proposed.

12. The appellant has identified a number of dwellings locally which have uPVC windows and doors of various colours, as well as other modern features such as solar panels. I have very few details of the circumstances that led to these being installed however, and therefore cannot be certain that they were comparable to the situation before me. Additionally, those dwellings are not necessarily part of a group where there was a clear benefit in retaining a consistent appearance as in this case. Furthermore, each scheme must be assessed on its own merits and having regard to the particular circumstances of the case. Therefore, the potential that the Council has granted planning permission for uPVC windows and doors elsewhere would not justify this proposal.

13. While the occupants of the other barn conversion may also wish to change their windows, there is no evidence before me that planning permission has been sought for this or which windows would be used. Therefore, I cannot rely on that property being altered in the same way as proposed here, so as to retain the consistent appearance of the dwellings.

14. Therefore, the proposed replacement windows and doors would harm the appearance of the dwelling and the area. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies E2 (e) and N1(h) of The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (adopted 2014) which expects development in rural areas to be of a high-quality design that have regard to local context.

Other Matters

15. The appellant suggests that the proposed UPVC windows are designed to last longer than typical timber windows and would provide better insulation, reducing fuel use as well as providing better security. This would be a limited environmental benefit which is supported by local policies seeking to incorporate energy conservation techniques. Nevertheless, it has not been demonstrated that the same benefits cannot be achieved with other windows.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. There are no material considerations that indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, the proposal would not accord with the development plan as a whole and, having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Sibley

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, I agree with the recommendation and shall dismiss the appeal.

L McKay

INSPECTOR