



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 January 2022

by Philip Major BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st February 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/21/3282224

Barns at March Farm, Lucewood Lane, Farley SP5 1AX

- 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 and Mrs Dunkerley against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref: PL/2021/05742, dated 2 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 13 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of 2 agricultural barns, which both have consent for conversion to dwellings, and the erection of a detached dwelling, and associated and soft landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area.

Reasons

3. The background situation in this appeal is the permission granted to convert 2 small agricultural buildings to individual dwellings by virtue of Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). The proposal is to replace those buildings with a single dwelling.
4. The existing buildings are small and single storey, with timber clad walls and, currently, roofs consisting of what is described as corrugated cement sheeting. They sit low in the landscape and are not visually prominent in the approach along the public right of way (which also forms the access for vehicles) from either the north or the south. The buildings are perceived as modest agricultural structures which sit comfortably in their surroundings.
5. These immediate surroundings are deeply rural. The landscape here is characterised by gentle slopes, pasture, intermittent tree belts, woodlands and hedgerows. This accords with the character identified in the Farley Forest Heath Mosaic landscape assessment. There are few buildings in sight, though the appellants' property lies adjacent to the appeal site, and glimpses of dwellings can be seen to north and south at some distance. It has been identified locally as a special landscape area, though it has no formal national designation. Nonetheless this is recognition of its attractiveness.

6. In this context it is my judgement that the proposed dwelling would introduce a jarring and incongruous feature. The height and bulk of the dwelling would be at odds with the overall character of the location and would visually dominate the views from the adjacent public right of way notwithstanding screen planting proposed. Although the conversions resulting from the Class Q permission would change the character of the locality to a degree, the buildings would retain their scale and height, and this would limit any visual intrusion. In contrast the height of the proposed dwelling would intrude into the skyline, and the bulk would be significantly greater than the small buildings which exist. I do not accept that the increase in height would be marginal. It is clear to me that the change in character to the local landscape would be far greater with this proposal than with that permitted.
7. In addition, the design of the dwelling would incorporate a steeply pitched roof, clay tiles, brickwork panels, prominent gables and large areas of fenestration. Taken as a whole I do not consider that it would resemble a barn conversion, or be seen as anything other than a quite large new dwelling in open countryside. In either the permitted or proposed case parking and residential paraphernalia would make some impact so this is a neutral point which offers no material support for the proposal.
8. I agree with the Council that permission granted by Class Q should not automatically be taken to demonstrate a fallback position which justifies an alternative proposal. I have considered those cases brought to my attention, but each has its own unique circumstances. Where a fallback position has been deemed to be significant in a decision to grant planning permission there are clear reasons for so doing. In this case the permitted development is so different from the proposal before me that it cannot realistically operate as a fallback which would result in similar impacts. I do not agree that the proposed building would offer the visual benefits suggested.
9. I recognise that the proposal has indicated environmental improvements to the wider land ownership beyond the application site, largely in the form of new planting. These are welcome but could be carried out in any event. Even if this planting were to be conditioned and implemented in full it is my judgement that the landscaping and other improvements proposed (such as wildflower areas, small area of woodland and new hedgerows) would not sufficiently mitigate the harmful impact of the proposed dwelling. Were the planting and other improvements not undertaken in the event of the permitted development being carried out it would not change the balance of my consideration on this issue.
10. Taking these matters together I am satisfied that the proposed development would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area. As such it would be in conflict with Core Policy CP51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy which seeks to avoid harmful impacts on landscape character. There would also be conflict with Core Policy CP57 which, amongst other things, seeks to ensure development responds positively to the value of the natural environment. Saved Policy C6 of the Salisbury District Local Plan has similar objectives in relation to the special landscape area, with which the proposal also conflicts.

Other Matters

11. The Council also refused planning permission because of the likely effect of the proposed development on the River Test Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This relates to nitrate neutrality and lack of mitigation. I have noted the confirmation that the calculations submitted by the Appellant are acceptable and that the proposal would offer the required mitigation. In such circumstances, which would rely on the land use changes outlined in the landscape specification and management plan being implemented, this would not be a matter which weighs against the proposal. The landscape specification and management plan could be required by condition as it sits within land controlled by the Appellants. Such a condition could require implementation and retention of the scheme prior to any dwelling being occupied, and would be enforceable by the Council. I am therefore able to conclude that there would not be a likelihood of significant adverse impact on the SAC. There is also a measure of support for the general environmental improvements, though as noted these could be undertaken in any event. However, taken in the round these are not matters which carry sufficient weight to overcome the harm I have identified in relation to the main issue.
12. I acknowledge that several local people are in support of the proposal. Support is based at least in part on residents of the dwelling being able to sustain and take part in the village community. But I see no reason why this should not apply equally to residents of the permitted dwellings. This is therefore not a matter which carries material weight in my decision.

Overall Conclusion

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

Philip Major

Inspector