



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2022

by Philip Mileham BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/D/22/3292128

1 Church Farm Barns Rectory Lane, Little Melton, Norwich, NR9 3PF

- 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 Professor Anshuman Mondal against the decision of South Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref 2021/2133, dated 23 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a two-storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area having regard to 1 Church Farm Barns, a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a converted barn which includes a two-storey main barn element, along with two single storey wings, one comprising residential accommodation and the other a store and other ancillary accommodation. The site is part of a group of barns which have been converted to residential use. The Council has identified that the barns are considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. The barns are important because of the quality of the group of buildings, and their layout being not unlike those found in a model farm layout with regular courtyard patterns in a 'U' or 'L' shape and located within a tight group.
4. The proposed development would add a two storey extension to the rear of the main part of 1 Church Farm Barns. This would create a new gable which would be perpendicular to the two-storey part of the barn. The proposed additional gable, due to its scale and position would disrupt the simple 'U' shaped footprint of the existing buildings, altering the traditional layout and obscuring the rear elevation which positively contributes to its appearance as a former agricultural building.
5. In addition to the above, whilst I note the proposal has been designed to deliberately contrast the existing building, I consider the shallow depth of the proposal along with the extent of its fenestration and detailing would result in a distinctly domestic addition to the existing buildings, which I consider would

detract from the visual appearance of the host building's agricultural usage. I consider this would result in an uncharacteristic alteration to the rear of the buildings, harming its appearance and adversely impacting the legibility of the rear elevation.

6. The appellant has indicated that the Council's suggested alternative single storey scheme would be harmful to the building and fail to meet the appellant's needs. However, an alternative scheme is not before me, and as such, I can only deal with the appeal scheme on its own merits. As such, this has not altered my findings in respect of the appeal proposal.
7. The Planning Practice Guidance on the Historic Environment (PPG) advises at paragraph 040 that decisions to identify non-designated heritage assets are based on sound evidence. The PPG also indicates that information on the criteria used to select non-designated heritage assets should be made clear and that it is important that all non-designated heritage assets are clearly identified as such. However, it also acknowledges that some non-designated heritage assets may be identified as part of the decision making process.
8. There is relatively limited evidence before me to explain the Council's reason for concluding that the barns are non-designated heritage assets, such as an explanation of the value of the historic buildings in terms of, for example, their rarity or their architectural as well as their historic interest and connection with the local area. However, whilst the information from the Council is limited, nonetheless, it must form the basis for my determination of the appeal.
9. The Council has highlighted the value of the form and layout of the historic barns as important parts of their significance. As set out above, the proposed development would disrupt the historic footprint and layout of the group of buildings and add a domestic feature to the building which would result in harm to the legibility of 1 Church Farm Barns. I consider this would also result in harm to the significance of the barn as a non-designated heritage asset. The scale of the harm would be significant having regard to the extent of the proposed development and its impact on not only the host building, but also its effect on the layout of the group of barns.
10. I have had regard to the guidance in chapter 16 of the Framework as it relates to the potential effect of development on heritage assets. Policy DM4.10 of the SNDMPD states that proposals must show how the significance of the heritage asset has been assessed and taken into account by reference to the Historic Environment Record, suitable expertise and other evidence/research as may be necessary. No evidence has been provided to demonstrate the effect of the proposal on the building as a heritage asset that Policy DM4.10 requires, and the proposal would therefore fail to accord with the policy in this regard.
11. In light of the above, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area having regard to 1 Church Farm Barns, a non-designated heritage asset. As such, it would fail to accord with Policies DM3.6, DM3.8 and DM4.10 of the South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document (2015) (SNDMPD) and Policy 2 of the Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (2011) (JCS) which collectively require the design and scale of the resultant development to be compatible to the area's character and appearance, that development will be designed to the highest possible standards and development must have regard to the historic environment and proposals which adversely affect the

significance of a heritage assets will only exceptionally be permitted where clear and convincing justification is provided.

12. The proposed development would also fail to accord with paragraphs 130 and 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which state respectively that planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of an area, and that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Conclusion

13. In light of the above, I conclude that the proposed development would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and the significance of a non-designated heritage asset to which I attach considerable weight. It would also conflict with the development plan when read as a whole.
14. Therefore, for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Philip Mileham

INSPECTOR