
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 April 2022

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3425/D/22/3291002

6 Manor Farm Barns, Shebdon Road, High Offley, Stafford ST20 0ND

- 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 Evans against the decision of Stafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/34448/HOU, dated 1 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 5 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a single-storey rear 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 building and the wider area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two-storey dwelling set within the open countryside and at one end of a range of formerly redundant barns that were converted following a grant of planning permission in 1999 (Ref: 98/35959/FUL). Although obviously now seen as residences, the conversion work has been sensitively undertaken, with the buildings clearly retaining the simple architectural form of their agricultural origins. During my visit I was particularly struck by the absence of any significant amounts of typical residential paraphernalia associated with any of the properties, including any notable extensions or alterations. In this regard, I note that permitted development rights were removed by a condition on the original planning permission. The result is an attractive, linear, and uniform range of buildings that make a significant and positive contribution to the attractive rural qualities of the locality and wider area.
4. The extension would be a 3m deep rectangular 'box-like' addition to the rear and across roughly two-thirds of the elevation to No 6 with mostly floor to ceiling glazed walls, timber or bamboo vertical cladding to one end, and with a flat roof finished in standing seam aluminium or zinc.

5. The appellant has argued that the extension has been deliberately designed to allow the original fabric of the building to be appreciated through the extensive amount of glazing. However, whilst there would be sight through the glazing, in practice the extension would be seen as a visually dominant contemporary addition to the rear, ground floor elevation that would be likely to shroud any meaningful perception of this part of the building's original form. Whilst I recognise the appellant's efforts to bring forward an extension of unique design and appearance, in my assessment it would appear as a 'bolt-on' adjunct that would look out of place by failing to respect the architectural composition of the original building, including the unbroken and consistent rear elevation of Manor Farm Barns as a whole.
6. The appellant has drawn my attention to an earlier addition to the building in a similar position to the proposed extension. However, for reasons that are unexplained, the extension that previously existed was not carried forward as part of the conversion works. Whilst it may be the case that many farm buildings have historically extended in practical ways by using resources that are on hand rather than with matching materials and styles, I am not persuaded that the clean lines and contemporary form of the appeal proposal would mimic this method. In addition, such an approach could pave the way for future, individual styled additions to the other homes at Manor Farm Barns that would be difficult to resist, especially those along this limb of the terrace, which would be to the further detriment of the building's rural character.
7. I have noted that the appeal proposal evolved from an earlier scheme to extend the property to the rear with a brick-built extension that was resisted by the Council. Be that as it may, I have considered this appeal based on the proposal that was before me.
8. Overall, for the reasons given, I find that the proposed extension would harm the character and appearance of the original building. This in turn would harm the rural character of the wider area. The proposal is for an extension to an existing dwelling therefore I find no conflict with the part of Policy E2 *Sustainable Rural Development* of The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011–2031 (PSB) which deals with the re-use of rural buildings. Nevertheless, the harm that I have identified means that there would be conflict with Policy E2 insofar as it requires all development in the rural areas to respect the built vernacular character of the area. For the same reason there would be conflict with PSB Policy N1 *Design* insofar as it requires development to take account of and to preserve local character, and the National Planning Policy Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed places. The appellant has drawn my attention to PSB Policy C5 *Residential Proposals Outside the Settlement Hierarchy*. However, this does not support development that would fail to appear proportionate to the type and character of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given, and having regard to all other matters raised, including some support that was expressed for the proposal and which I have noted, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan INSPECTOR