



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 July 2022

by Samuel Watson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/22/3295278

Thorndon Grove, Windmill Lane, Stoulton, WR7 4RP

- 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 R Middleburgh & Ms Proctor-Nicholls against the decision of Wychavon District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02996/FUL, dated 23 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of existing barns including link extension, to replace approved residential conversion. Resubmission of planning permission 20/01714/FUL to include two 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 host buildings and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is set within a rural location surrounded primarily by fields and some sporadic development. The prevailing character of this area stems from this rural and agricultural nature. The site itself is a rectangular plot which is accessed from Windmill Lane and is located between two detached dwellings. The site contains two barns, one a long timber building and the other a two-storey brick building which appears to be newer. Both barns extend perpendicular to the road.
4. There are two extant permissions on the appeal site¹ which cover the conversion and extension of the two barns for use as residential dwellings. The permitted extensions would be of a single-storey and finished in a modern, but simple style. The proposal before me would result in a similar extension connecting the two barns but with an area of pitched roof, and a two-storey rear extension to the brick barn, also with a pitched roof. The finish would be similarly modern in appearance.
5. Although the proposed materials would be significantly different to the existing materials used on site, they would prevent the extensions from appearing as a pastiche of either of the existing barns. Moreover, the proposed materials would help maintain the legibility of the original form and layout of the barns and their former use.

¹ 19/00825/GPDQ and 21/01912/FL

6. Nevertheless, the scale and form of the proposed extensions, especially the two-storey extension to the brick barn, would harm the proportions, form and appearance of the barns. Furthermore, they would be prominent features visible from the highway which provides public views of the site. Whilst parts of the permitted scheme may also be visible in public views the prominence of the proposal before me would be exacerbated by the increased scale and height of the extensions. Whilst I note some mature trees partially screen the site, these could easily die, be removed, or cut back and it is unlikely they would provide any meaningful screening when not in leaf.
7. Therefore, the proposed extensions would collectively result in prominent and jarring additions to the existing barns to the detriment of their character and appearance, and consequently to that of the surrounding area. Although the proposed landscaping scheme may be of a quality design that would introduce trees, and wild planting areas, this would not be sufficient on its own to outweigh the above harm to the buildings or surrounding area.
8. Likewise, whilst the proposal may meet some of the guidance set out within the Residential Design Guide: A Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD, September 2010) under Part 5.5, such as incorporating design breaks, the proposal would nevertheless conflict with other parts, as outlined above, to an extent that it would not reflect or be sympathetic to the design, proportions or balance of the original two barns.
9. In light of the above, the proposal would result in harm to the distinctive character and appearance of the host buildings and surrounding area as a result of its design and scale and massing. It would therefore conflict with Policies SWDP21 and SWDP25 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (the SWDP, February 2016). These policies collective, and amongst other matters, require that proposals are appropriate to, and integrate with, the character of their surroundings including the landscaping. Moreover, they require that proposals reinforce local distinctiveness and whilst new or innovative designs are acceptable, this is only where they enhance the quality of the built environment. The development would also conflict with Section 12 and particularly Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the framework) which seeks to ensure that developments are sympathetic to the local character and landscape setting, maintaining a strong sense of place, as well as the guidance of the SPD, as outlined above.

Other Matters

10. The appellant has submitted that they could carry out the extant planning permission and then, under permitted development rights, carry out further extensions which would result in the proposal before me. Whilst this may be the case, no substantive evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that it would be possible. I cannot therefore be certain that there is a realistic possibility for the works to be carried out and therefore find that this would not be a fallback.
11. Working from home may now be a more common pattern of working, but I do not find that it is so prevalent, nor that it can be relied upon in itself to significantly reduce private motor vehicle trips. Whilst the appellant may no longer need to commute to work, the development would likely outlast the personal circumstances of the appellant.

12. The appellant has made reference to Policies SWDP2, SWDP4, SWDP15, SWDP27 and SWDP29. Whilst the proposal may not conflict with these policies, this is merely finding a lack of harm rather than a benefit of the proposal. As such this lack of conflict has not been determinative in my consideration of the appeal. Policies SWDP1 and SWDP22 have also been referred to by the appellant and I have been mindful of them, in particular, in the planning balance below.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. The proposed scheme would lead to a small and time-limited economic benefit during the construction phase, as well as some limited social and economic benefits resulting from future occupiers. The proposal would also provide the potential to improve biodiversity on site and would be accessible for future occupiers with more limited mobility. I find that these matters would all be benefits, and given the small scale of the proposal, they would attract modest weight.
14. Whilst the proposal may provide a larger area of amenity space for future occupiers, it has not been demonstrated that the previous schemes provided an unacceptable level of amenity space. As such, I give this matter very little weight.
15. The Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of housing but whilst the proposal would provide one dwelling, this would only replace an extant permission for a new dwelling. consequently, this proposal would not contribute towards increasing the supply of housing.
16. Conversely, the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host buildings and surrounding area, contrary to the requirements of the development plan, this matter attracts significant weight and outweighs the benefits associated with the proposed development.
17. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, for the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Samuel Watson

INSPECTOR