
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2023

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/T3725/D/22/3306713

The Barn, Big House Farm, Church Road, Norton Lindsey, Warwickshire CV35 8JE

- 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 Briggs against the decision of Warwick District Council.
 - The application Ref W/22/0390, dated 3 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a timber framed garden room.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The Barn is listed due to its association with Big House Farm, which includes a Grade II listed farmhouse. Under section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended, I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Main issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is whether the proposed development would preserve the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

4. The Barn is a dwelling that forms part of a group of converted agricultural buildings with access from Church Road. In my view, the conversion of the appeal building to residential use has essentially, and successfully, retained the simple form, linear plan layout and traditional appearance of a former farm building. The plain brick walls, uncluttered tiled roof slopes and pattern of openings retained in the existing front and rear elevations combine to reinforce this strong impression. The significance of The Barn as a designated heritage asset is, therefore, derived from the architectural interest and visual merits of the existing building and its historical association with Big House Farm.

5. The proposal is a rear extension in the form of a garden room. The new addition would be a timber framed structure with glazing on 3 sides, brick to match the existing dwelling and a dual pitched roof.
6. When considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It also advises that significance derives not only from the heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting.
7. The proposal would be simple in design and have a light-weight appearance given the extensive use of glazing. Its scale would be subordinate to the host building. Little of the new extension would be evident beyond the secluded rear garden of the appeal property. While the appeal scheme would enlarge the scale and footprint of the existing dwelling, the proposed garden room would therefore be visually contained within the back garden of The Barn.
8. Nevertheless, by projecting significantly outwards from the main rear wall, the proposal would disrupt the linear plan form of the building, which is a distinctive feature of the original property. The proposal would also introduce a rather stark domestic addition with full length glazed units on each side. This arrangement would visually compete with, and so distract from, the large historic opening at the rear, which is a key architectural feature of the original property. It would also remove or cover a significant expanse of brickwork in the rear façade, which forms a dominant part of the barn's external fabric.
9. For these reasons, the proposal would appear as a discordant and uncharacteristic add-on to the dwelling. It would dilute the agricultural character of The Barn to its detriment and loosen its historical ties with the former farmstead. As a result, the listed building and its setting would fail to be preserved and its significance as a heritage asset would be diminished.
10. I saw that the rear elevation of The Barn has been externally altered to some extent to reflect the residential use of the building and the proposal would be seen in that immediate context. However, the exterior of the dwelling remains well preserved given its age and the rear façade still forms an attractive composition, notwithstanding these changes. When viewed from the back garden of the appeal property, The Barn is clearly legible as a former agricultural building with features of architectural and visual interest.
11. I also recognise that listed buildings have to evolve with buildings and structures added and removed over time to reflect the changing needs and circumstances of users. Planning policy at all levels acknowledges this process. In my experience, new development involving listed buildings can add visual interest and protect the historic fabric. However, the process of change does not in itself justify introducing a discordant and intrusive form of development, as sought. I also acknowledge that the new extension would not be conspicuous in the public domain nor readily visible from the main farmhouse. However, the requirement to preserve the listed building applies whether or not the proposal is available to public view or is prominent.
12. Reference made to other extensions to adjacent properties within the same group as The Barn that the appellants say have been approved by the Council. Few background details of these schemes have been provided and so I cannot be certain that their circumstances are the same or very similar to those of the

appeal scheme. Consequently, I am unable to attach more than limited weight to these examples in support of the appeal.

13. While the identified harm would be less than substantial, it still carries considerable importance and weight. In those circumstances, the Framework states that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits, as does Policy HE1 of the Warwick Local Plan 2011-2029 (LP).
14. The benefits arising from the new garden room, which include an improvement to the living accommodation for the appellants and future occupiers, would be largely private. I am not persuaded that the proposal would be needed to ensure the long-term conservation of the curtilage listed building or to secure its optimal viable use given that it is already an occupied dwelling. No other public benefits would outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
15. On the main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to and so fail to preserve the listed building and would diminish its significance as a designated heritage asset. Of the policies and guidance cited by the Council that are most relevant to the proposal, the appeal scheme would conflict with LP Policy HE1 and the Framework with regard to protecting heritage assets.
16. The site is not within the open countryside and the proposal does not involve the conversion of a rural building. Consequently, LP Policies H14 and BE4, which are referred to in the reasons for refusal, do not have a direct bearing in this appeal.

Other matters

17. While the new garden room would fall just outside the Norton Lindsey Conservation (CA), the appeal building is situated within this designated area. The effects of the new garden room would be localised with public views of The Barn and the group to which it belongs largely unaffected. As such, the contribution of The Barn to the character and qualities of the CA, as a whole, would remain unchanged. Therefore, the proposal would have a neutral effect on the CA, with both its character and appearance preserved. This finding does not alter my conclusion in relation to the main issue.
18. The Council states that, if permitted, the development would set a precedent for similar extensions to converted barns elsewhere that cumulatively would harm the rural character of the countryside. However, I disagree. In my experience, it is rare that the circumstances of one development or site are the same or very similar to another given that local conditions often vary. In any event, each proposal should be considered on its own merits, which I have done in this instance.
19. The site falls within the Green Belt. The Council appears to raise no objection insofar as the effect of the proposal on the Green Belt is concerned. From the submitted evidence, I have no reason to reach a different view. This consideration does not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified in relation to the main issue.
20. The appellants are critical of the Council in their approach to determining the application because in their view irrelevant policies were applied and the proposal was assessed incorrectly. The appellants also refer to the lack of clarity from the Council as to whether listed building consent was required.

However, my remit is solely to determine this appeal, which seeks planning permission, on its individual merits.

Conclusion

21. The proposed development would fail to meet the statutory duty in regard of listed buildings. It would also conflict with the development plan, as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR