



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2023

by M J Francis BA (Hons) MA MSc MCIfA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/22/3310889

Deer Barn, Stonyhurst, Clitheroe, Lancashire BB7 9QX

- 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 David Littlechild against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2022/0495, dated 8 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as “for the unauthorised window and doors that the previous owner installed to be allowed to remain. Please see drawings enclosed”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Notwithstanding the description of development set out above, which is taken from the application form, for clarity, and in the interests of conciseness, and as dealt with by the Council, the proposal is “retention of unauthorised windows and doors installed by previous owners”.
3. The changes to the building relate to a planning approval granted in 2015¹. Although there are a number of internal changes and external openings which differ from this approval, it is a set of French doors on the southern elevation and a large window on the eastern elevation (the unauthorised openings) which have been cited as the Council’s main areas of concern and are the focus of the appellant’s submissions. I shall determine the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the unauthorised openings on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area, having regard to the location of the site within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB).

Reasons

5. Deer Barn is a stone built, two-storey, barn conversion, with a catslide roof over a southward projection. It is located adjacent to another house and is in an elevated position overlooking the surrounding, gently rolling countryside. The area is characterised by fields enclosed by hedging, with individual and groups of trees dotted amongst them. Areas of woodland, rows of cottages and farmsteads also punctuate the expansive views.

¹ 3/2015/0452 – Proposed barn conversion for residential use

6. The site is located within the AONB. Such areas are designated for the purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty and section 85(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty upon me to have regard to these purposes in this decision. Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that 'great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs' which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. Further, Policy Key Statement EN2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008-2028 (adopted December 2014) (the Core Strategy) requires the landscape and character of the AONB to be protected, conserved and enhanced.
7. The French doors on the southern elevation are located below the catslide roof. The doors are to eaves height and so cover the majority of this particular part of the southern elevation. This would have been, prior to the doors' insertion, the only blank wall visible to the southern side of the building.
8. Although the subdivision of the glazing of the doors has retained a vertical emphasis, the overall style, particularly the side panels, suggests a domestic character which does not reflect the robust and utilitarian nature of former agricultural buildings. When read in combination with three rectangular windows further along the same southern side of the building, the French doors initiate an unduly domestic character to this elevation of the building.
9. Indeed, the introduction of the doors, in combination with an excessive number of other openings, including rooflights, has resulted in a southern elevation, taken as a whole, where the ratio of glazing to solid stonework is too great and undermines the character of this key elevation.
10. In proximity to the French doors on the east elevation is a large picture window. This window has a horizontal emphasis, set much lower than most windows, including those found on the southern elevation of the building. This creates a large void, at odds with the proportion of openings typically, uncharacteristic of a historic building of this nature. The unauthorised openings, when viewed together, create a fenestration pattern which is unsympathetic and fails to reflect the former agricultural use of the building. These elevations, I note, can be seen from the country road which provides access to the site from the village of Stonyhurst. Indeed, the building takes an elevated position in the landscape and the unauthorised openings undermine its historic integrity and contribution to the area. This is even though timber window and door frames have been utilised.
11. For the above reasons, having regard to the site's location within the AONB, the unauthorised openings cause harm to the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area. Therefore, the unauthorised openings do not accord with Policies Key Statement EN2, DMG1, DMG2 and DMH4 of the Core Strategy in so far as these policies seek development to achieve a high standard of design, and to be consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.

Other Matters

12. It is understandable that the appellant wishes to retain the openings to maintain the layout and use the rooms as they expected when they purchased the property. It is also apparent that they have inadvertently inherited a breach of planning control, as well as other issues not identified at the time of

purchase. They have also set out the pressures that this situation has created for them and their family.

13. Whilst I sympathise with the situation that the appellant is in, it is my responsibility to focus upon the planning merits of the case before me. Moreover, the retention of the unauthorised openings would ultimately satisfy private needs and wishes and offer no substantive public benefits sufficient to outweigh the planning harm that I have identified.
14. The development under consideration conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations or other matters, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

M J Francis

INSPECTOR