



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 December 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/22/3305477

Cosy Cats Barn, Cornhill, Pattishall, Towcester NN12 8LQ

- 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 Joyce against the decision of West Northampton Council.
 - The application Ref: WNS/2022/0785/FUL dated 8 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 6 July 2022.
 - The application is for single storey side extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area and the host building.

Reasons

3. The appeal property 'Cosy Cats Barn' is a traditional stone building that was seemingly at one time related to the nearby Cornhill Manor. Cornhill Manor appears to relate to several other agricultural buildings and structures to the south of the appeal site. I have no information before me as to the particular significance of these other buildings but it seems clear to me that there was some relationship historically between them.
4. 'Cosy Cats Barn' is however somewhat set apart from the majority of the farm buildings here, but it still contributes to what I consider is a fairly typical agricultural layout of linear building ranges placed around courtyards with a plethora of other structures of differing styles and scale, all of which contribute in a positive manner to the overriding character of the area. The appeal property itself was substantially reconstructed in recent years, but nevertheless still contributes to this setting. The building has more recently seen the erection of a pitched roof double garage built of what appears to be a local ironstone material within the property curtilage and this serves vehicular access onto the private driveway that runs through the wider complex.
5. The site is within an identified Special Landscape Area (SLA) which is recognised as a fragile and high quality area of natural beauty. The appeal site is located upon a high valley edge with its gardens sloping gently downwards from the existing linear barn building in the direction of the valley below. In

light of this location, Policy NE2 requires that development proposals affecting such an area would be expected to be sensitive in terms of siting, form, scale and materials, and that 'particular regard' has to be given to the design and impact of any proposed development within the SLA.

6. Similarly, the Council's own design guidance¹ has a particular section on the reuse of agricultural buildings and section 7.57 of this guide states that extensions to such agricultural buildings would only be permitted where they would result in an environmental improvement to the building, site or wider area. These policies are reflected within the Council's Local Plan Policies SS2(b), SDP1 and NE2(2).
7. In assessing this appeal therefore, I give significant weight to the guidance before me as the proposal would see an extension of some scale being located to the gable end of the existing barn, which would then protrude outward into the garden. The proposed extension would differ from previous schemes in the fact that it intentionally departs from the local vernacular character and instead intends the extension to be more minimal and contemporary in its design. Its use of vertical timber cladding as its principal material is one example of this contemporary contrast.
8. The proposal would also be largely separate from the principal dwelling that is contained within the barn and would utilise a glazed link so as to remove any potential to visually compete with the existing gable wall. With regards the existing farm complex nearby, there is currently a hedge that separates the two areas and both are located along a private driveway which means the site is not visible from any public right of way that I have been made aware of.
9. In assessing the principle of such an extension, I consider the linear form of the existing building is of some quality and significance, this is despite it being largely a rebuild of an historic structure. I also find that it is very difficult to determine where the actual 'front' of this building currently sits. What is obvious is that the elevation facing the garden is more exposed, but obviously private, and that the access to the property is along the private drive and shielded by the existing hedge.
10. I saw on my site visit that the wider farm complex consisted of several other buildings of varying scales. Although these are, for the most part, traditional and historic structures, they demonstrate that such complexes have evolved over the years with additions of varying types. Therefore, I consider that as long as there is the potential to secure an environmental improvement through a scheme then such an evolution to such buildings could continue as per the guidance within the Design Guide.
11. However, despite this building not being overly visible from the farmyard itself due to the intervening hedge, and despite its contemporary means of separating the building through the glazed link, I am unable to ascertain any such environmental improvements to this building that would allow it to fully meet the guidance within the design guide.
12. Moreover, I consider that, although a contemporary approach could be made to work here, were the above guidance to be met, the design detailing of the proposed extension would still, in its present form, cause some harm to the

¹ South Northamptonshire Design Guide 2017.

overriding character of the existing freestanding barn. This is not so much due to the layout or siting of the extension, but rather its overall architectural quality and detailing which I do not consider is of a good enough quality for this sensitive site. For instance, even in accepting the principle of a contemporary and contrasting extension, the vertical slit windows and lantern design, as well as the overall proportions all fail to respond well to the sensitive character of this site and appear clumsy and poorly related to their context.

13. This would result in a modern design that largely fails to take much inspiration in terms of its proportion, form or detail from its surroundings. Even were I to depart from the Council's Design Guidance therefore, the overall proposal would be harmful to such a degree that it would fail to meet the other policy guidance that outlines the importance of achieving a high quality design solution for such a sensitive site.
14. Ultimately the proposal before me would fail to demonstrate the necessary improvements to meet the guidance for such extensions and it would also cause some harm through its overriding form, scale and design detail. As such the proposal would fail to respond to the SLA and the significance of the existing barn itself and would ultimately fail to conform to Local Plan Policies SS2(b), SDP1 and NE2(2).

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR