
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 17 February 2023

by Louise Crosby MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 3 March 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/W0340/D/22/3296228

Awberry Farm, The Green, Beenham, Reading, RG7 5NX

- 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 N Hopes against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref: 21/03233/HOUSE, dated 22 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 25 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is a two storey extension to rear of farmhouse, following demolition of twentieth century additions.
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/W0340/Y/22/3296236

Awberry Farm, The Green, Beenham, Reading, RG7 5NX

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr N Hopes against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref: 21/03234/LBC2, dated 14 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 25 March 2022.
 - The works proposed are a two storey extension to rear of farmhouse, following demolition of twentieth century additions.
-

Decisions

1. Both appeals are dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposed extension would preserve a grade II listed building and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and whether it would conserve and enhance the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

Listed building

3. Awberry Farmhouse dates back to the early 19th century. It is listed at Grade II. Awberry Farmhouse (formerly known as Awbury's farmhouse) is an attractive farmhouse consisting of a symmetrical front elevation of 3 bays with timber sash windows, one of which has been replaced with a modern

casement. There is a central panelled door with plain surround surmounted by a flat hood on brackets. The rear elevation is more vernacular in character and appearance. It comprises 3 bays consisting of 3no. 19th century 2 storey half-hipped timber framed projections. The central bay has been extended during the 20th century in a piecemeal fashion and is now a 2 storey extension with a slate roof, rather than tiles.

4. The upper floor of the existing rear extension is clad in timber weather boarding. This more modern addition fails to respect the character of the building and is detrimental to the architectural balance of the original building. It is agreed between the parties that this is of no particular architectural or historic value and I agree. That said, the more modern extension, despite being poorly designed, is an honest extension that is subservient to the main building.
5. The farmhouse is estimated to have been built between 1883 and 1889 as a replacement farmhouse. The rear elevation of the building contains old, exposed timbers which it is believed may have been salvaged from its predecessor.
6. The special interest and significance of the farmhouse is derived from its architectural quality as a 19th century vernacular farmhouse. With the exception of the casement window at the front and the rear extension it remains true to its original design and construction. The high ceilings and accommodation internally indicate a high-status farmhouse. It is agreed that the rear extension is of lesser significance.

The effect of the proposal on the listed building

7. The proposal involves demolishing the modern rear extension which contains a small kitchen and lobby at ground floor level and part of a bedroom at first floor level. The demolition in itself is uncontroversial. However, it would be replaced by a larger part 2 storey and part single storey extension. The extension would provide a large open plan kitchen and family room along with a small porch on the ground floor and a larger bedroom with ensuite facilities on the first floor. It would be constructed from brick and tile to match the existing dwelling.
8. The existing extension already projects the central section of the rear elevation out to a significant degree and this proposal would increase that further. When viewed from the side, because of its projection from the rear elevation, combined with its height, the proposal would appear extremely large by comparison to the depth and overall scale of the original farmhouse. As a consequence, the extension would appear as a very large overly dominant extension, despite the half hip on the roof to match the existing rear bays.
9. The extension would by virtue of its projection, overall scale and bulk result in it appearing as a dominant and incongruous addition to this grade II listed building. Moreover, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
10. Whilst it would secure the removal of the existing extension which fails to respect the character and appearance of the building, the removal of the extension should not be at any cost. In my view a much more sympathetic

replacement could be designed. Whilst it might not provide the quantum of additional living space that the appellant is seeking, a good sized modern kitchen could be provided in a smaller extension that would conserve special interest and significance the listed building.

11. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have a significant detrimental effect on the special interest of the Grade II listed building. As a result, the proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 197 of the Framework. There would also be conflict with West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (CS) policy CS14 in so far as it promotes high quality design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area and policy CS19 which seeks to protect the historic environment.

The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and AONB

12. The appeal site is accessed by a track leading from the village of Beenham. The farmhouse and associated buildings are located just to the north of the village, beyond the defined settlement envelope of the village, in open countryside and in the AONB. The house and the associated farm buildings are located in cluster in an otherwise open setting, despite being close to the village centre of Beenham. Indeed, to the rear of the dwelling there is a domestic garden which is open in character, with the exception of a few single storey traditional outbuildings, and then beyond that is open fields. The area to the rear of the property, in particular, has a very rural character and appearance.
13. Whilst the farmhouse will be visible from some of the properties in the village and from a public footpath, this is restricted to the front elevation mainly. However, that is not to say that just because the rear elevation cannot be seen in public views that it does not matter. As set out above, the proposal would result in a larger, more prominent dwelling as a result of the proposed large 2 storey rear extension. The extension would appear far larger, more dominant and bulkier than the existing it would replace in an open countryside location within the AONB.
14. The proposal would have an adverse effect on the rural character of the area and fail to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB contrary to CS policies ADPP 5 which seeks to conserve and enhance the AONB; CS14 which promotes high quality design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area and policy CS19 which aims to protect the historic environment and landscape character. There would also be conflict with Housing and Site Allocations DPD 2006-2026 policy C6 in so far as it seeks to ensure extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside are subservient to the main dwelling and in character with it and that they respect the rural character.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

15. Paragraph 199 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. That is irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm.

16. I have identified harm to the special interest of the listed farmhouse. However, given that the proposal is limited to a rear extension, I consider that the level of harm would, in the language of the Framework, be 'less than substantial'. In that case, paragraph 202 of the Framework indicates that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant argues that a large living kitchen is required to enable the farmhouse to operate properly. As set out above I am of the view that a larger modern kitchen could be provided in a smaller extension that would have substantially less impact on the special interest of the Grade II listed building.
17. In any event, the proposal is essentially for the private benefit of the appellant rather than for the benefit of the public at large. Therefore, any public benefits that there may be, are insufficient to outweigh the harm, which although 'less than substantial' still attracts great weight.
18. Added to this is the harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the failure of the scheme to preserve and enhance the AONB.
19. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

Louise Crosby

INSPECTOR