



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2023

by J Evans BA(Hons) AssocRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 May 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/23/3314667

Lowlands, Newlands Lane, Pulham, Dorset DT9 5QG

- 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 Graham House against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/HOU/2022/05462, dated 2 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 31 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as a two storey extension to existing dwelling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Issues

2. During my site visit, it became apparent that the name listed under the appellant details on the appeal form incorrectly referred to the appellants agent, this was likewise the case with regard to the name listed under the applicant details on the original application form. As a consequence, I have revised the name of the appellants to Mr and Mrs Graham House, as set out in their agent's email to the Planning Inspectorate dated 4 May 2023, so this reads correctly. Had I been minded to allow the appeal, it would have been necessary for me to seek revised ownership certificates from the appellants to enable the development to proceed in accordance with the Planning Acts. As I have dismissed the appeal it has not been necessary for me to do so.
3. The appeal property is named as 'Lowlands Farm' on the original application form, but is otherwise referred to as 'Lowlands' on the decision notice, the appeal form and within the appeal submissions. From the information before me, it would appear that 'Lowlands' is the correct name for the appeal property and as a result I have referred to the appeal property as 'Lowlands' in my decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this case are the effects of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the appeal property and the wider area;
and
 - the living conditions of existing and future occupiers of the appeal property.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal property is a detached single storey barn conversion set in attractive rural surroundings. It is understood that the property obtained planning permission in 2003 for the conversion of a barn into holiday accommodation and in 2014 a change of use was granted to allow the building to be used as a single dwellinghouse.
6. Whilst the appeal property is clearly in residential use, its original function and purpose as a traditional agricultural building is still evident. Safeguarding these traditional characteristics through an adaptive re-use would presumably have been the basis for supporting the conversion of the building in 2003.
7. The appeal proposal seeks to extend the property to its north-eastern side. However, unlike the single storey nature of the existing building, the proposed extension would provide accommodation over two floors, and this would ultimately lead to a physical addition of a greater height, massing and scale to the original building.
8. Whilst I appreciate every effort has been made to keep the height of the proposed extension down, by being of a greater scale and overall physical mass to the appeal property, the extension would lack subservience, and this would overwhelm the characteristics of value associated with the existing building. Further, the design approach to accommodating the upper floor windows within the roof space of the proposal, would lead to a confusing visual appearance that is rarely found on buildings of this type, and would ultimately appear alien to the simple functional character of the appeal property. This would also increase the visual and character harm arising from the proposal.
9. Whilst there may be some scope to extend to the northern side of the appeal property in a subservient and commensurate manner, such as in lieu of the existing timber shed, it is the size, massing and overall appearance of the appeal proposal that would ultimately lead to an incongruous addition to the detriment of the character and appearance of the existing building and that of the wider area.
10. As a result, on this matter I find conflict with Policy 28 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 (2016) (the NDLP), which amongst other matters, requires alterations or extensions of an existing dwelling in the countryside to be of a size and design that is no more visually intrusive in the landscape than the existing dwelling, and to be of a size that is subservient in scale and designed to be in character with the existing dwelling. The proposal would also conflict with paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework), which amongst other matters requires development to be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

Living conditions

11. Due to the physical footprint of the appeal proposal, it would result in the loss of an area of the usable domestic outdoor space associated with the appeal property. However, space would be retained to the western side of the property which at the time of my visit was used for outdoor seating, and further space for the parking of vehicles and wider domestic use would be retained to the

- east. There are other areas within the garden that would be retained for outdoor storage of bins and other items.
12. Further, the garden to the property is not enclosed from the wider rural landscape by high level fencing, whereby occupants of the appeal property have an attractive outlook over the wider area. The surrounding land is also owned by the appellants, and they thereby have control over it.
 13. I have also taken careful consideration of the points made by the appellants regarding the existing size and usability of the internal space of the appeal property. It was evident from my site visit that the appeal property currently provides for a constrained living environment and an increase in internal space would evidently improve the living conditions of existing and future occupiers of the appeal property. The appellants have also pointed out that the floorspace of the existing accommodation falls short of the government's *Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard* (the housing standards). However, whilst I accept this further demonstrates the constrained manner of the existing internal space as highlighted above, the housing standards relate to new, rather than existing dwellings and are therefore not of direct relevance to this appeal.
 14. Ultimately, in my view the appeal proposal would provide for a benefit to the living conditions of existing and future occupiers in that it would provide for an improved standard of internal living environment. I am also satisfied that the outdoor living space that would be provided for the property would be acceptable due to the retained areas of space within the garden of the appeal building and the open rural context of the surroundings to the appeal site.
 15. I thereby find that the proposal would not conflict with Policy 25 of the NDLP in that the appeal proposal would provide an appropriate garden space with adequate levels of daylight and sunlight for the needs of occupiers of the appeal property. Further, the proposal would be supported by paragraph 130 of the Framework, which amongst other matters requires development to provide for a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other matters

16. In reaching my decision I have taken into account the examples of other proposals approved in the surrounding area as referred to me by the appellants. However, none of these appear comparable to the proposal before me, which relates to an extension to an existing residential barn conversion. But nonetheless, I am required to consider the proposal on its own individual merits in any case.

Planning balance

17. While I have found that the appeal proposal would have a positive effect on the living conditions of the appellants and future occupiers of the appeal property, it would have a detrimental effect on the characteristics of the appeal property and that of the wider area.
18. As a result of these negative effects, the proposal is in my view unacceptable, and contrary to the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no material considerations that would justify a decision contrary to the provisions of the development plan, in this case.

Conclusion

19. For all the above reasons, having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Evans

INSPECTOR