



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 May 2023

by A Price BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/D/22/3308023

Honeysuckle Barn, Birch Lane, Flaunden, Hertfordshire HP3 0PT

- 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 Flaunden Construction Ltd against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02060/FHA, dated 28 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is the installation of conservation style rooflights in the rear roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Flaunden Construction Ltd against Dacorum Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area, including whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Flaunden Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a converted agricultural building positioned to the east side of Birch Lane. The site forms part of a wider complex of buildings including stables and other converted agricultural buildings. The site lies within the Flaunden Conservation Area (CA). The significance of the CA lies, insofar as it relates to the appeal, in its rural village character and picturesque groups of cottages and buildings constructed in traditional materials.
5. The appeal building has a simple and traditional agricultural style and form, consistent with its setting. Both front and rear roof slopes are finished in tile and do not currently contain any rooflights or similar openings. The proposed development includes the installation of five new rooflights to the rear roof slope.
6. Whilst the proposed rear-facing rooflights would not be readily visible from much of Birch Lane, they would be glimpsed between breaks in landscaping and, in any case, viewed from the multiple private vantage points of nearby

- properties. Although mature and semi-mature trees exist along part of the boundary of the site, these cannot be relied on in perpetuity to provide the same level of cover as at present.
7. The number of rooflights proposed, together with their positioning within the same roofslope, would dominate the currently uninterrupted rear roofslope, forming a cluttered and incongruous addition to the appeal property. The highly domestic nature of the proposal would be out of keeping with the appearance of the appeal property, which although in residential use currently retains a traditional agricultural character. That the proposal relates to 'conservation-style' rooflights is noted. However, this does not reduce this impact and there is limited substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that those rooflights would truly be fitted flush with the roofslope. Overall, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the appeal building, eroding its agricultural character, and that of the surrounding area.
 8. As the appeal site falls within the CA, statute places a duty on me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. As described above, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area. For those reasons, I find that the proposal would have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the CA, neither preserving nor enhancing it.
 9. Whilst the proposed development would be harmful, I consider the development to give rise to 'less than substantial' harm. In line with the requirements of paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), this harm must be weighed against any public benefits.
 10. The appellant sets out that the installation of rooflights would provide natural light to the first floor, forming a preferred method of increasing the sustainability credentials of the building. This is an environmental benefit. However, the nature of the proposal, together with its association with a single established dwelling, is such that this benefit would inevitably be very limited and is not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.
 11. Overall, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area and would fail to preserve or enhance the CA. It would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset and in the absence of any public benefit to outweigh that harm, the proposed development would be in conflict with the relevant provisions of Policy CS27 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013). This policy, amongst other objectives, seeks to ensure that development will positively conserve and enhance the CA. This is in a similar vein to the objectives of paragraphs 197 and 202 of the Framework insofar as heritage matters are concerned.

Other Matters

12. My attention is drawn to an allowed appeal at Castle Hill, Berkhamsted. I have limited detail before me in relation to that appeal scheme. Although it is evident that that other appeal relates to a converted agricultural building, it concerns the installation of a lower number of rooflights than is the case under the current appeal. Moreover, the site is positioned in a different part of the borough. Accordingly, the specific location and context of the sites are not directly comparable. In any case, I have considered the proposed development

on its own individual circumstances and that other appeal decision has not altered my conclusion on the main issue.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other relevant material considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

A Price

INSPECTOR

