



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2023

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/M2840/W/22/3311423

Primrose Barn, Chapel Farm Barns, The Green, Northamptonshire PE8 5LD

- 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 S. Ellis against the decision of North Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref NE/22/01017/FUL, dated 5 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is the change of use of vegetable patch to domestic curtilage, and two-story side extension and lean to.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues relevant to this appeal are:
 - the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and
 - the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site consists of a disused stable building which has subsequently been converted to a domestic dwelling. The surrounding buildings are also former agricultural buildings that have been converted to domestic purposes. These are arranged in a nucleated form, which would mean that they are sited in a cluster. The appeal site is predominantly surrounded by countryside.
4. The proposed extension would result in a projection into an open area to the side of the dwelling. This means that the proposed extension would project beyond the broad nucleus of the former farm complex. In consequence, the proposed development would result in a substantially larger building.
5. In addition, the proposed extension would have a front and rear elevation broadly in line with the front and rear elevations of the existing stable block. Furthermore, the height of the extension would be comparable to the height of the existing building.

6. In result of this design approach, the proposed development would not be a subordinate addition to the building. Therefore, the proposed development would disrupt the traditional form of architecture in that it would result in the provision of a building that would be significantly larger than originally constructed.
7. The proposed development would project into an open area to the side of the appeal side. Therefore, owing to the proportions of the proposed development and its siting, the development would result in a more engineered appearance owing to the increase in the overall level of built form.
8. My attention has been drawn to a previously permitted extension at a nearby dwelling. I understand that this has yet to be constructed, although I have no reason to believe that the permission will not be implemented. Accordingly, I have given it weight in my consideration.
9. However, given that the neighbouring dwelling is orientated differently, any extension at the neighbouring dwelling would run perpendicular to the appeal site. Therefore, it would not have the same projection into an open area that the proposed development would create. Therefore, the scheme would not have the same adverse effects. In result, the presence of this development does not allow me to disregard the previously described adverse effects.
10. The proposed change of use of the land to domestic curtilage is unlikely to have the same effect as the proposed extension. However, this does not overcome the concerns.
11. Concerns have been raised regarding the assessment by the Council against the provisions of its Householder Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2020) (the SPD). Whilst I recognise that the SPD is a relatively general document, one of the purposes of it is to ensure that developments do not harm the character of the surrounding area. For the preceding reasons, this objective would not be met.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development would therefore conflict with the requirements of Policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2016) (the JCS) and the SPD. Amongst other matters, these seek to ensure that proposed developments respond to the site's immediate and wider context and local character, respond to the character of the settlement; and that extensions do not detract from the original design of the building.

Effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area

13. The appeal site is in the Ashton Conservation Area. For the purposes of this appeal, the significance of the Conservation Area is, in part, derived from the presence of traditionally designed buildings that are constructed to a functional style of architecture, surrounded by open areas. This means that the built form of the appeal site is reflective of the wider area's former use.
14. The appeal site is located slightly beyond the main body of the former farm complex and, potentially, its construction predated most of the farm complex. However, the appeal site forms part of the nucleus of development and, together, the buildings form a distinctive character. In addition, a notable feature of the appeal site is the presence of more open, rural areas beyond.

15. The proposed development would result in an elongated form that would conflict with the traditional form of architecture that is a feature of the existing building. In addition, the proposed extension would disrupt the proportions of the existing stable block and former agricultural buildings nearby. This adverse effect would be exacerbated by the heights of the extension which would create a bulky building.
16. I acknowledge that the appeal site is in a former farm complex, where there are several linear buildings. Some of these buildings have similar proportions to the appeal scheme. However, the proposed development would project beyond the nucleus of the built form that makes up the former farm complex. Therefore, the development would erode the style of architecture that is a feature of the Conservation Area, and the presence of open areas around it. This would occur even though the appeal site is located at the edge of the Conservation Area.
17. In reaching this conclusion, I have had regard to the palette of materials that would be used within the proposed extension. Although these may match the existing building, they would not overcome the adverse effects arising from the mass and siting of the proposed extension.
18. This is a concern given the general prominence of the appeal site. In addition to some views from neighbouring properties, the proposed development would be visible from a footpath that runs to the side of the appeal site. Therefore, the proposed development, and its erosion of the Conservation Area's character would be readily experienced by a greater number of people. It would therefore be a strident feature.
19. The proposed development includes some traditional architectural design cues. However, this does not overcome the harm arising from the form and siting of the proposed development.
20. I have had regard to the potential to erect an extension at the nearby building of the Estate Office. This extension, by reason of its siting, would not have the same overall level of prominence as the appeal scheme would have owing to its location at the centre of the farm complex.
21. In addition, the extension at Beehive Cottage would not have the same level of prominence as it is located perpendicular to the appeal site. In result, it would not create a loss of the area's more open character and would not be as prominent. Therefore, the possibility of extensions elsewhere does not allow me to forego the previous adverse effects.
22. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The development, in this regard, would conflict with the requirements of Policy 2 of the JCS. Amongst other matters, this seeks to ensure that new developments conserve and, where possible, enhance the heritage significance and setting of heritage assets.

Other Matters

23. Concerns regarding the manner in which the Council considered the planning application fall outside of the scope of this decision.

24. Although conditions could be imposed in respect of archaeological investigation, this is only one of all the matters that must be considered. It therefore does not outweigh my findings in respect of the main issues.

Planning Balance

25. The harm that would occur to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would not be severe and therefore it would be 'less than substantial' within the meaning of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
26. In this instance, the benefits include an increase in the size of the dwelling. However, the scale of the development is such that it would not result in a notable change to the local housing supply. Therefore, any benefits would be small and can only be attributed a limited amount of weight.
27. In addition, there would be some economic benefits arising from the construction process and the occupation of the development. However, owing to the scale of the proposed development, such benefits are only likely to be of a small scale. In consequence, they can be attributed a limited amount of weight.
28. Therefore, when giving significant importance and weight to the special attention I must pay to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, I find that the harm that would arise from the proposal would not be outweighed by its limited public benefits. Accordingly, there would be a conflict with Paragraph 200 of the Framework as harm to designated heritage assets would not have clear and convincing justification.

Conclusion

29. The proposed development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The scheme would therefore conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR