



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 June 2023

by Sarah Colebourne MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/23/3318903

Grange Farm Cottage, Grange Farm, Newport Pagnell Road, Preston Deanery, Northamptonshire, NN7 2DT

- 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 Daniel O'Neill against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref WNS/2022/2306/FUL, dated 24 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is: Demolition of existing sunroom. New Triple Garage with office room over. New first floor extension over existing single storey aspect. New Two storey front entrance gable and porch. New Two storey rear extension to Southern aspect. Replacement of all windows with some existing openings adjusted. Internal alterations and associated external works to create new parking areas. Removal of 1no. chimney.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Reasons

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the dwelling and the site. The development plan includes policy SS2 1.b. and 2. of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029 (LP) which requires that proposals are compatible and integrate with their surroundings in terms of type, scale, massing, siting, form, design, materials and details. National policy in the National Planning Policy Framework has a similar objective and seeks to encourage good design.
3. The appeal site is located within a small group of former farm buildings accessed by a long drive and public footpath from the road and surrounded by open countryside. The group comprises both residential and business uses. The appeal dwelling is set on a large plot that is bounded by open countryside on three sides with a dwelling to the north and a barn to the east. It comprises a former traditional farmhouse cottage which has an L-shaped form with a large attached two storey element to the rear, an attached single storey element of some length to one side and an attached sunroom to the other side. It is unclear to me whether or not the attached two storey and single storey elements were once barns that have been converted or rebuilt to form part of the dwelling but in any case, the original form and character of the cottage remains evident and the attached two storey and single storey elements have many features characteristic of agricultural buildings. As such, the dwelling

retains much of its original, agricultural character and sits comfortably in its rural setting.

4. The proposal includes a centrally placed two storey gabled projection with an open flat roofed porch, a first floor extension above the single storey element continuing the existing ridge and a large two storey projection to the rear, the replacement of the sunroom with a two storey extension to form a triple garage with office accommodation above and a flat roofed single storey extension to the side which would be attached to the existing two storey element.
5. It would result in a u-shaped dwelling and a rear courtyard. Whilst this is a feature of some farmhouses, in this case it would obscure the original layout of the cottage and its yard, especially when seen from the south facing side elevation.
6. Furthermore, the siting, size and scale of the extensions would be wholly disproportionate to those of the existing dwelling. The main front elevation would be particularly unsympathetic with the extensions more than tripling the width of the dwelling at first floor level. No attempt has been made to break up the mass of the extensions and the continuation of the existing ridge merely exacerbates the scale of the first floor extension. The garage extension would be almost as wide as the original cottage and this, together with its length and height would result in an excessively bulky mass whose roof form and pitch would not reflect any of the existing roofs. The projecting two storey gable is not a feature that reflects the simple vernacular character of a farmhouse cottage and it would be visually disruptive to the front elevation. The siting of the flat roof extension would obscure the existing large two storey 'cart horse' opening that forms an attractive feature in the two storey element and should be retained.
7. I am also concerned by the detail of the proposal. The flat roof porch is a discordant feature reminiscent of a portico and a much grander style of architecture that is inappropriate for a rustic farm cottage. The windows of the front projection do not reflect the scale or proportions of either the existing or the other proposed windows.
8. I have noted that the complex includes the large scale former agricultural building at Deanery Court that has been converted to business use and a three bay barn to the east of the site previously granted permission for business use but the existing dwelling has a domestic scale that should be reflected in any proposals. I also saw at my visit that the dwelling to the north has been extended and has a detached triple garage but that dwelling is of a different style, scale and character to the appeal dwelling and has a different site context. Whilst the complex has buildings of different size, scale and character, it is important that any changes reflect the character of the individual building and site too.
9. This is a very poorly designed proposal that makes little attempt to reflect the character of the dwelling and its site. The resulting dwelling would be of vast proportions which would subsume the original cottage and the agricultural character of the attached elements. Although it would not be seen from the road, character is not dependent on public views but, in any case, it would be seen from two nearby public footpaths to the east of the dwelling.

10. I find, therefore, that by reason of its siting, scale, massing, form, detail and overall design, the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and the site and would be contrary to the LP policy SS2 1.b. and 2. referred to earlier and to the Framework.

Other matters

11. I have had regard to the objections concerning living conditions from a third party. Although the Council's officer's report found that the proposal would harm the outlook of occupiers of the neighbouring dwelling to the north, that matter does not form part of its refusal. The distance between that dwelling and the proposed garages is some 14m according to the plans. As that dwelling is sited on slightly higher ground, screened at ground level by a high hedge and the nearest first floor window in that dwelling would not look directly towards the proposal but would have an oblique view, I am satisfied that the proposal would not be unduly overbearing when seen from there and there would not be any significant harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers in terms of outlook. For the same reasons, it would not result in significant harm in terms of privacy or noise either and the proposal is acceptable in terms of its effect on neighbouring living conditions.
12. I have not been provided with sufficient details to determine whether or not the proposal would harm the laurel tree on the boundary with that dwelling but given my findings in regard to the scale of that garage, the appeal does not turn on this matter.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that whilst I have found no harm in regards to living conditions, my findings in regard to character and appearance are significant and overriding. The proposal would be contrary to the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh this. The appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector