



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2023

by K Allen MEng (Hons) MArch PGCert ARB

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/D/22/3310048

**The Old Stables, 6 Blackwells, Norcott Hill, Northchurch, Hertfordshire
HP4 1RB**

- 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 Gaunt against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01432/FHA, dated 5 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 12 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is a rear extension and minor changes to existing windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a rear extension and minor changes to existing windows at The Old Stables, 6 Blackwells, Norcott Hill, Northchurch HP4 1RB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/01432/FHA, dated 5 May 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: P_1000 Existing Floor Plans, P_1010 Rev A Proposed Floor Plans, P_2000 Rev A Existing Elevations and P_2010 Rev A Proposed Elevations.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the one given on the original application.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the host property, as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is within the Chilterns AONB with open land to the west predominantly in agricultural use and the land to the east comprising a wooded area known as Northchurch Common. The appeal property forms part of a larger group of attractive converted former farm buildings on the edge of this wooded area. The previous conversion has maintained the agricultural character and appearance of the structures, including simple forms, steeply pitched gable roofs and the use of various traditional materials. Dormers of a limited scale are present within the grouping and appear in keeping with the agricultural character of the buildings. Overall, the farm grouping contributes positively to the rural landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
5. The appeal property is L-shaped with a long, low east/west range with a short one and a half storey crosswing along Norcott Hill. Although there are other properties to the north, it is the final structure enclosing the farmyard and is prominent from the highway. The property benefits from an enclosed rear garden with extensive mature planting adjacent the highway, while views to the west remain relatively open.
6. The Old Stables significance lies in its robust, linear and simple form, use of traditional materials as well as its connection to the wider group of buildings and their association with agriculture.
7. The proposed dormer would be located on the western roof slope, minimally visible from public view. The design and scale of the dormer would be similar to a number of other dormers located within the farm group. It would be set down significantly from the ridge line with the overall scale limited to the size of the window and would appear subservient to the main linear mass. Further, rooflights appear throughout the farm group and due to their low profile, would not distract from the overall simplicity of the roof form adjacent the highway.
8. Although the proposed extension would project beyond the historic building line of the property, it would continue the strong linear pattern of development seen along Norcott Hill and would not affect the existing enclosed farmyard character of the wider grouping. The proposal would extend the built mass of the farm grouping to the north, however it would not encroach on open countryside and would be disguised in long views by the neighbouring properties and mature garden. The proposed gable would be visually prominent in short views when approaching from the north, however this would replicate the current prominence of the existing gable.
9. Due to its use of traditional materials, detailing and simple linear form, the extension would be sympathetic to the host property and would be in keeping with the rural context. The host property and the adjoining dwellings would continue to be read and understood as a large complex of former farm buildings.
10. Overall, the proposed extension would maintain the simple agricultural character of the host property as well as the wider farm grouping and would not harm the significance of the host property. Although the proposal would extend the built mass to the north, it would maintain the openness of the surrounding countryside and would not detract from the setting or landscape character of the area. The proposal would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, a consideration which I give great weight to.

11. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the AONB and the host property as a non-designated heritage asset. The proposed development would accord with Policies CS7, CS12, CS24 and CS27 of the Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy 2006-2031 (September 2013) which collectively seek to ensure that development is appropriately located, integrated within the street scene whilst protecting and conserving the area's landscape and heritage assets.
12. In addition, the proposal would accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seeks to achieve well-designed places which conserve and enhance landscape, the scenic beauty of AONBs and non-designated heritage assets.

Other Matters

13. I note concerns raised by the conservation and design consultee regarding access issues and the loss of the large vehicular access gate from Norcott Hill into the rear garden. However, the primary vehicular access and parking area to the front of the property would not be affected by the proposal and it is clear from the appeal drawings that a pedestrian access gate would be retained into the rear garden.

Conditions

14. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council and have amended the wording where necessary in the interests of clarity and simplicity. A condition is required to ensure compliance with the approved plans as this provides clarity. To ensure design quality and that the proposal properly assimilates into its surroundings, I have imposed a condition which requires the use of matching materials.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would accord with the development plan, when taken as a whole. Material considerations, including the Framework do not indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
16. Having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

K Allen

INSPECTOR