



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2023

By Terrence Kemmann-Lane JP DipTP FRTPI MCMI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/V2255/D/22/3314666

Appleyard Barn, Plough Road, Eastchurch, ME12 4JH

- 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 Justin Smith against the decision of Swale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/504725/FULL, dated 28 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of single storey side/rear extension to existing utility room. (Retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of single storey side/rear extension to existing utility room at Appleyard Barn, Plough Road, Eastchurch, ME12 4JH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/504725/FULL, dated 28 September 2022, and the plans submitted with it.

Preliminary matters

2. The application form described the proposed development as "Extension to existing utility room" however, the council changed this to the description that I have used in the heading above, which was also used by the appellant on the appeal form. I adopt this as it more clearly describes the development proposed.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect on the character and form of the existing dwelling as a former agricultural building.

Reasons

4. This appeal relates to a detached house that results from the conversion of an agricultural barn. It is located in the countryside. The conversion has been carried out sensitively, but naturally it and its curtilage clearly have taken on a domestic character. The main characteristics as a rural barn were preserved as part of the conversion, including a catslide roof to the rear. I am told that there was a small flat roof rear extension added to the building some 20 odd years ago which has been demolished as part of the development. There is a dwelling on either side of the appeal site but otherwise, in the vicinity of the site, the north side of Plough Road is devoid of development. To the south there is an enclave of residential development that takes its access from Eastchurch Road, but otherwise the area is rural with holiday parks.

5. The appeal development has already been carried out. It is single storey, situated at the rear of the barn, and wrapped around the north-western corner. It has a half-hip roof, the angle of the slopes set to match the pitch of the catslide roof. From the front, little can be seen; the element that comes round the corner of the building appearing as a small lean-to. From the rear, the roof of the addition intrudes somewhat on the simple form of the catslide.
6. As a former barn, the council's guidance on barn conversions, contained in the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), "The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings" is clearly relevant to the decision. This guidance seeks any conversion of a traditional building to be achieved with the minimum number of alterations for the purpose required. The guidance makes clear that it will not normally be considered appropriate to extend the existing building to accommodate the use, and the importance of retaining agricultural character.
7. The materials, window and door details of the extension match the host building, with timber weatherboarding, reclaimed red brick plinth, slated roof. and timber window and door details. The extension has also been constructed in a traditional way, with timber eaves and soffits. The appellant points out that, in the past, there were existing structures attached to the barn, and an old photograph has been submitted in confirmation. The catslide is a major element of the original barn, since it descends from a high ridge down to within about 2.25m from the ground. The roof of the extension does intrude on the roof form of the building, but historically it is not unusual for agricultural buildings to be modified and added to in consequence of the needs of the farm. This is demonstrated by the submitted old photographs that show historical additions to this barn in past times.
8. The extension does not have the appearance of the extensions shown in the old photographs: like the barn itself in its latest manifestation, it is immaculate in its appearance. Because of the careful use of matching materials and respecting the angle of roof pitches, the extension integrates very well visually. The building remains a characterful converted building that retains a clear distinctiveness as a former agricultural barn. As the SPG referenced above points out, a major consideration is the importance of retaining agricultural character. That character is largely one of appearance; the converted barn, with its extension, maintains the appearance of that agricultural character. The prominent barn features remain in place and from public vantage points, the extension has no impact, and the barn continues to provide local distinctiveness.
9. Since I am finding in favour of granting planning permission, the personal circumstances that are raised need not be detailed. Personal circumstances rarely can be given great weight, because their nature is that such circumstances change for many reasons and often in the short term. Nevertheless I note that paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policies Framework makes reference to people with disabilities in the context of meeting the needs of different groups. An addition to a dwelling that makes it suitable for a range of people with different needs is a small planning gain.

Conclusions

10. For the reasons that I have given above, the converted barn, with its extension, maintains an agricultural character. The prominent barn features remain in place, and from public vantage points the extension has no impact,

and the barn continues to provide local distinctiveness. I will therefore allow the appeal.

11. There appear to be two rooflights indicated on the rear elevation on both the existing and proposed plans. For the avoidance of doubt, the appellant has confirmed that consent is not sought for this and that it is an error in the drawing.
12. Since the development has already been carried out, the council has indicated that there are no conditions that should be applied to any planning permission granted. I agree.

Terrence Kemmann-Lane

INSPECTOR