



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2023

by Nick Bowden BA(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/D/23/3327276

Brooklands House, 167 Caxton End, Bourn, Cambridgeshire CB23 2ST

- 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 & Mrs Ward against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- The application Ref 23/00991/HFUL, dated 14 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 3 July 2023.
- The development is a proposed conversion of existing outbuildings/gym/stores/woodshed into a granny annex for the property, renovation of part of existing outbuildings to provide for 2 new carports & 1 enclosed garage, updating and works to existing stores.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - a) whether the development would be ancillary to the existing dwelling, and
 - b) the effects of the development on the character and appearance of the host building and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bourn Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

Ancillary use

3. The appeal site comprises the existing dwelling at Brooklands House together with a range of barns which form a broad L shape to the east of the house. These are presently used for domestic storage and as a home gym associated with the main dwelling. The barns are accessed by way of the former farmyard which forms a small courtyard and is set behind a gate on the driveway which also leads to the main house. The proposed alterations are to upgrade the barns to provide ancillary living accommodation, as an annex to the main house, and as car ports. The living accommodation provided would offer a living room, kitchen, dining area, two bedrooms and two bathrooms.
4. The level of accommodation means it could be capable of being occupied as an independent dwelling and this could be done so with minimal, or no, further alterations than those proposed. However, this is not what has been applied for and the barns are intended as accommodation for an elderly relative. A

condition restricting occupancy to a relative, or otherwise as ancillary accommodation, could be imposed to control this occupancy and prevent the creation of an independent dwelling.

5. The provisions of policy H/13 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (SCLP) relate to extensions to dwellings in the countryside. This policy requires that such extensions should not create a separate dwelling or be capable of separation from the existing dwelling. However, in this case, excepting for the car ports which do not form part of the living accommodation, the barns are existing and do not require extension to be converted to ancillary living accommodation. Indeed, as existing domestic outbuildings, they may presently be used for such purposes. For these reasons, the conversion of the barns to ancillary living accommodation, as an annex, would not conflict with policy H/13 of the SCLP. A condition can be imposed to restrict this occupancy. This will ensure it accords with policy H/13 of the SCLP and does not result in the creation of an independent dwelling.

Character and appearance

6. Brooklands House and its barns are located to the western end of the Bourn CA. This part of the CA is characterised by a mix of detached homes and barns which are set in a well landscaped setting and are broadly clustered along Caxton End and Bourn Brook. The significance of this part of the CA is the loose clustering of older houses and barns in this sylvan setting.
7. As the barns are to be converted, there would be minimal additional built form introduced. However, the alterations to be undertaken to facilitate the conversion are of a domestic vernacular which jar with the rural character. The windows, doors and roof lights to be inserted into the north and western elevations are of a modern domestic style and would disrupt the traditional agricultural appearance of the barn. The window to be inserted in the south side, to the living room, would be large and also of a distinctly residential vernacular that would disrupt the traditional rural appearance of the locality. Moreover, the extension to form the car ports would be inconsistent with the style that would have been traditionally used to extend the barns and provides further, unwelcome, domestic fenestration. Although I accept that many of the alterations would be internal to the site not readily visible in any public context, the site still forms part of the CA and would still affect the integrity of the heritage asset.
8. S72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 places a duty on me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. In making this assessment I have also had regard to paragraph 201 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). I conclude that the introduction of the domestic fenestration would harm the character and appearance of the CA.
9. The Framework advises, at Paragraph 199, that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Accordingly, while less than the substantial harm referred to in Paragraph 201 of the Framework, the harm to the CA is nevertheless a matter of considerable importance in this case.

10. Paragraph 202 of the Framework also requires that, where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Bringing these barns into practical use would be a benefit and I attach weight to this. However, the window and door detailing, use of multiple roof lights and domestic vernacular to the car ports does not outweigh the benefits in this instance. I conclude that this domestic vernacular, would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. The development therefore conflicts with policies HQ/1, H/13 and NH/14 of the SCLP insofar as these alterations would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA which is a requirement of these policies. These policies are in accordance with the objectives of the Framework.

Other Matters

11. I have noted references to the proposed use of the annex for an elderly person. However, no details have been provided of any specific care or disability needs for this person and I am unable to attach any weight to this consideration.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that, as a conversion, the use of the barns as ancillary accommodation would be acceptable, subject to the imposition of a condition to restrict its occupancy as ancillary to the main dwelling at Brooklands House. However, the detailed design of the windows, doors, roof lights and the car port extension would have a domestic vernacular that would erode the traditional agricultural appearance of the barn and therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. The proposal therefore conflicts with the provisions of the development plan, read as a whole, and the Framework. As such I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Bowden

INSPECTOR