



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 March 2024

by Tamsin Law BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3425/W/23/3326849

Hawkswood Barn, Broad Hill, Beffcote, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST20 0ED

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Birch against the decision of Stafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/36954/FUL.
 - The development is described as "regularisation of the change of use of land to residential curtilage and retention of boundary wall and detached garage."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is retrospective in that the development has already been fully implemented.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host building and area.

Reasons

4. The appeal forms part of an area of land to the front and side of an existing dwelling. The appeal site is accessed via a single lane track, with hedgerows and mature trees on both sides. This, combined with large area of grass verged and glimpses into agricultural land, gives the area a rural character and a spacious and verdant appearance.
5. The appeal building is a semi-detached barn conversion which forms part of a group of buildings located in the open countryside. The development comprises an area of land to the front of the building, which during my site visit had been utilised as an area of garden, with paving, small sheds and a boundary wall and gate. A detached garage had also been constructed, which due to its location, forward of the front elevation of the host dwelling, blocks views of the barn conversion and is visible when travelling along the access lane.
6. I observe from the plans and my site visit that the development has led to the enclosure of an area of land that would have been left open. This, combined with the suburban design and appearance of the wall, gates and garage, erodes the rural character and spacious feel of the area. The garage, walls and gates project forward of the barn conversion, hiding it from view when travelling along the access lane. Together these give an overly suburbanised, domestic appearance to the area. This is at odds with the simple, vernacular, red brick

appearance of the existing barn conversions and significantly erodes its rural character.

7. Notwithstanding the use of similar materials, the garage, extended curtilage and associated walls and gate appear as an incongruent afterthought rather than part of an integrated design that respects the character of the original building.
8. The appellants are of the opinion that the Council has approved a similar scheme at the neighbouring barn conversion. Whilst I accept that an outbuilding has been approved, the neighbouring site has a larger curtilage, and the proposed garage appears to have been designed to appear as a small red brick barn. As such, the specifics of that case are not directly comparable to the appeal before me. Consequently, I give this limited weight in the planning balance of this appeal.
9. Accordingly, I conclude that the development harms the character and appearance of the host buildings and area and conflicts with Policies E2, N1 and N8 of The Plan for Stafford Borough (2014) which seek, amongst other things, to ensure that developments include high design standards that takes in to account local character. The proposal would also not comply with paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework that seeks good design sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

10. The appellant has asserted that the development is lawful, due to the time that has elapsed since it was constructed. However, this has not been substantiated through a Certificate of Lawfulness and is eroded by the limited information submitted with the appeal.

Conclusion

11. For the above reasons, there are no relevant material considerations, including the approach of the Framework, that would indicate a decision otherwise in accordance with the development plan. It is for this reason that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tamsin Law

INSPECTOR