



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 April 2024

by M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/23/3332348

Detached single storey road side barn ¼ of a mile South West of Crowdecote, on the road between Crowdecote and Longnor.

- 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 Robert Johnson against the decision of the Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is NP/SM/1222/1535.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of redundant barn to one bed residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The existing agricultural barn does not have a formal address. In the banner heading above, I have used the address given on the planning application form and as used in the National Park Authority's (NPA) decision notice.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the appeal proposal would constitute an acceptable form of development, having regard to i) the provisions of the development plan policy in respect of new housing; and ii) the local landscape character.

Reasons

New Housing

4. Policy DS1 of the Peak District National Park Local Development Framework; Core Strategy Development Plan Document (CS) 2011, sets out the Authority's overall development strategy which includes supporting the re-use of traditional buildings for housing.
5. The parties refer me to the pre-text to Policy DMC3 of the Development Management Policies; Part 2 of the Local Plan for the Peak District National Park (DMP) 2019¹. This defines a traditional building as a property built prior to 1919 with solid walls constructed of moisture permeable materials. The NPA advises that the building does not appear on the 1922 OS map of the area, but is included on an aerial photograph from 1971, neither of which are before me.

¹ Page 4 respectively in both the appellant's statement of case and the NPA's officer report.

6. The appellant's evidence is further inconclusive as to the precise date of the building, advising that it was constructed approximately 50 years ago² and stating that there is an etching in the concrete floor dated 1932³. It seems to me that in combination, all of the evidence presented points to the building being built some time after 1919. In this respect, despite being of traditional materials and a solid wall construction, the barn does not wholly meet the definition of a traditional building.
7. Policy HC1 of the CS states that new housing provision will not be made for housing solely to meet open market demand and that it will be acceptable only in specific exceptional circumstances. Parts A and B of Policy HC1 indicate that new housing may be acceptable where it is to meet local needs, provide for aged persons assisted accommodation or provides for key workers in agriculture or other rural enterprises.
8. The appellant suggests that the proposal would provide a dwelling for their son who works on the farm. It is not clear from the evidence presented, which farm the barn relates to, or how the conversion of the barn would meet an essential need for a person to reside at, or near to, their place of work, to enable it to be considered as a proposal for an agricultural workers dwelling. In any event, the appellant's appeal statement clearly sets out that the proposal is for an open market dwelling⁴. There would be no restrictions placed on the occupancy of the dwelling such that if allowed, it could legitimately be occupied as a holiday cottage, or sold off separately from any existing farm business. As an open market dwelling, none of the exceptions defined in Policy HC1 Parts A and B apply.
9. Part C of Policy HC1 indicates that new housing may be acceptable (in accordance with Policies GSP1 and GSP2 of the CS), where it is required to achieve the conservation or enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings, or it is required to achieve conservation or enhancement in specified settlements. The barn is not listed, nor lies within a Conservation Area such that it is not a designated heritage asset⁵. It is not located within a specified settlement.
10. Whilst the barn could reasonably be described as being vernacular in form, design and materials, the NPA has clearly not identified it is a valued vernacular building in terms of any historic or architectural merit it may possess⁶. No substantive evidence has been provided by the appellant, for example a heritage statement, to confirm otherwise. Consequently, the barn is not a valued vernacular building and there is a direct conflict with Policies HC1 and DS1 of the CS. Part B of Policy DMC10 of the DMP is also clear that buildings which are not deemed to be a heritage asset will not be permitted for conversion to higher intensity uses.
11. Even if I could accept that the building is a traditional or valued vernacular building, Part C of Policy HC1 advises that the proposal should be required to achieve the conservation of the building. No evidence has been advanced to demonstrate that the proposed conversion is required for the conservation of the building or that it would fall into disrepair were it not converted to a

² As set out within the appellant's planning statement.

³ Page 5 of the appellant's statement of case.

⁴ As described on pages 1, 2, 8 and 9 of the appellant's appeal statement.

⁵ As defined within Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 18a-023-20190723 of the Planning Practice Guide.

⁶ As set out in the NPA's officer report.

dwelling. At the time of my visit the barn was not redundant and was in use by cattle, as per its original purpose.

12. For the above reasons, the proposed barn conversion would not be acceptable, having regard to the provisions of the development plan in respect of new housing. The proposed development would be contrary to Policies DS1 and HC1 of the CS and Policy DMC10 of the DMP, which together seek to control the provision of new housing and limit the conversion of buildings to specific circumstances.

Landscape Character

13. The appeal site comprises a field barn of a simple rectangular form and constructed of local gritstone walls under a dual pitched clay tiled roof. It is sited adjacent to the main Longnor to Crowdecote road. An external yard is enclosed by timber posts and corrugated sheets to the south.
14. The barn is clearly visible from the main road as well as the public right of way network to the south, including the footpath within the field to the rear. In such views it appears isolated and visually divorced from the built environs of Crowdecote. Instead, it is observed in wide open views as part and parcel of an agricultural landscape of enclosed undulating pastures, some of which contain evidence of surviving medieval arable cultivation (ridge and furrow). As a simple agricultural building, it contributes positively to the character and appearance of the landscape.
15. The proposed barn conversion would generally retain the overall form of the original building albeit with the addition of 3 rooflight openings and an increase in the ridge height and therefore, the steepness of the roof pitch. This would lead to the barn taking on a more domestic appearance in approaching views from the east or west, particularly at night or during inclement weather when internal artificial lights would be on.
16. Although not described as such, it seems likely to me that over time the land to the rear of the barn would be used as garden, particularly for the purposes of sitting out, given its south-facing orientation and relationship with the proposed living room. While conditions could be imposed to restrict some forms of development which would otherwise be permitted, there would be likely to be a proliferation of domestic paraphernalia such as garden furniture, washing lines, plant pots and play equipment which could not practically be controlled by conditions. Such domestication would be exacerbated by the presence of a parked car. The proposed post and rail fence, nor the nearby topography of the land which is open in nature and absent of extensive tree cover, would not adequately mitigate such impact in close range views from the main road and the nearby footpath, or more distant views from the Crowdecote to Hurdlow road.
17. The external alterations along with the use of the barn as a dwelling would lead to the intensive domestication of the barn and the appeal site as a whole. Consequently, the proposal would have an adverse effect on the local landscape character. It would therefore be contrary to Policy L1 of the DMP which seeks to protect landscape character whilst also paying attention to the character and design of buildings.

18. Given that my findings above indicate that the development is not acceptable in principle, I see no reason why Policy DMC3 is relevant, as suggested by the NPA.

Other Matters

19. I note the letters of support from interested parties. However, support does not equate to a lack of harm and I have come to a different view regarding the impact of the development on the landscape character.
20. The lack of objections from statutory consultees and minimal impact on local infrastructure are neutral matters, weighing neither for, nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

21. The proposal would fail to accord with the development plan and there are no considerations that would outweigh this conflict. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

M Clowes

INSPECTOR