

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2024

by **Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th September 2024

Appeal Ref. APP/Q4625/D/24/3345868

Wad Barn, Berkswell Road, Meriden, Coventry CV7 7LB

- 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 Mrs Sue Bassi against the decision of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application ref. is PL/2024/00400/MINFHO.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as “*Extension to main unit*” and more comprehensively on the Council’s decision notice and the householder planning appeal form as “*Part two storey, part single storey snug, sun room and bedroom extension and single storey extension (Resubmission of PL/2021/02988/MINFHO).*”
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. The Council found that the proposed development would not infringe the relevant local and national policies aimed at protecting Green Belt land. I see no reason to disagree. Thus, the sole main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the original host property.

Reasons

3. The host building is a former barn with a distinct original L-shaped floor plan. It was converted into a 2-storey dwelling in the relatively recent past. The building is of brick construction with a clay tiled roof. It is set well back from the road along a private driveway and within a hard surfaced yard. The rear (south-western) elevation overlooks a large lawn and the upper part of that elevation can be glimpsed in views from Berkswell Road. The wider surroundings of the site are resolutely rural in character.
 4. The distinctiveness of Wad Barn is derived mainly from its simple and clear plan form, steeply pitched and long uninterrupted roof slopes, traditional materials, modest fenestration as viewed in the round and vernacular character and fine detailing such as stone quoins at the original corners, dentilled brick verges,
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exposed timber rafters, decorative dentilled courses of brickwork and occasional stone tabs, all of which are indicative of its agrarian origins.

5. There is an existing single-storey, lean-to extension, about 4m in depth, on the same rear elevation subject to the appeal proposal. This extension has skewed the simple historic form of the building towards the lawned area, although the converted building largely retains its traditional character and appearance and makes a positive contribution to the rural character and appearance of the area. However, the proposed addition to that existing extension of a 2-storey projecting gable alongside another lean-to ground floor extension would seriously deviate from the pleasing simple form of the former barn.
6. The roof over the new 2-storey gabled projection would be stepped down from the main ridge by only a nominal amount and the width of the overall extension would be such that only a tiny amount of the original rear wall would remain visible. The scheme would add substantial additional mass and bulk to the rear of the building. The addition of a tall gable that would extend perpendicular to the roofline of the building over a depth of about 4m would clutter up and break up the views across the long rear elevation, blur the original simple plan form and disrupt the roofscape. I saw no other similar gabled projections to the main elevations of this building; where gables exist they would appear to be the gable ends of the original building.
7. The proposal would rely on large sections of modern glazing with a considerable proportion of the new rear-facing wall consisting of glass, including across 3 separate sets of folding doors. Such extensive use of modern fenestration would appear discordant against the more traditional proportions and character of the existing openings of the former barn and the solid expanses of brickwork, including across the existing rear elevation, which help to preserve its agricultural heritage. This element of the scheme would harm the building's intrinsic character by introducing excessive and overtly modern features that would appear out of place.
8. The extensions would appear incongruous because of their lack of sympathy for the architectural integrity of the appeal building and harm the historic form and proportions of the building. Rather than making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, adding visual interest, providing design continuity and harmonizing with the existing dwelling, the proposed development would be a discordant addition that would radically change and erode the traditional character, appearance and significance of the host building.
9. The appellant points to a reduction in built form from the approved development and says that this approval would be rescinded as part of any approval on the appeal scheme. There is no mechanism in place to secure the rescinding of that previous permission and it seems to me that the 2-storey extension to the north-western gable end envisaged under that earlier scheme could still, in all probability, be physically capable of being erected alongside the current appeal extensions.
10. There is no evidence that the original barn had a hayloft accessed by a full height gable feature and the modern glazing treatment shown in the appeal scheme is not particularly redolent of such a feature. Judging from the stone tabs retained in the walls and the elevational treatments, it appeared to me that where the existing main front and rear entrances are located were probably full height openings in the

original barn. The appeal scheme would entirely cover the existing rear entrance which is partly clad in timber at the upper level.

11. In Appendices D, E, F and G to the appellant's statement, my attention is drawn to other approved developments, only one of which (D) is within the jurisdiction of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. The site contexts and proposals in each case vary. The form, scale, building type and character of The Bungalow (at D) are wholly different to the appeal property. With the scheme in the area of Telford and Wrekin Council (E and F), the Inspector was struck by how the proposed gable feature of the extension would reflect the same design feature of an existing extension on the end of the wing of Lammas Barns. With the scheme in the area of South Norfolk District Council (G), the barn at Wicklewood may have required more extensive extensions and alterations to make it fit for residential use in the first place, but it is notable that the rear 2-storey gabled projection is not as wide or as deep as that proposed at Wad Barn nor are there lean-to, single-storey projections attached to it. I have considered the appeal scheme before me on its own merits. These other examples do not convince me that the appeal proposal is acceptable.
12. I find on the main issue that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the original host property. As the proposed development would fail to secure good quality design and fail to conserve and enhance local character and distinctiveness, there would be conflict with the aims of Policy P15 of the Solihull Local Plan – Shaping a Sustainable Future, December 2013. The appeal proposal would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as it relates to achieving well-designed and beautiful places and pursuing the environmental objective of sustainable development. In addition, it would eschew various design principles within the Council's House Extension Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document February 2010, particularly in relation to style and character.
13. Attached to the Council's Questionnaire is the Berkswell Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2019-2033, made on 5 September 2019. It is not referred to in the appellant's written representations or by the Council in its decision notice or officer's report and I saw nothing in it that would change the decision I have come to in this appeal. I have attached some weight in favour of the scheme to the extent that it would accord with the economic and social objectives of sustainable development but the benefits in these regards would be limited and not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have found under the main issue.
14. My finding on the main issue is decisive to the outcome of the appeal. The visual harm I have identified cannot be mitigated by the imposition of planning conditions. There would be conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that outweigh this conflict. For the reasons given above, I conclude that this appeal should not succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR