

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 September 2024

by S M Holden BSc (Hons) MSc CEng MICE CTPP FCIHT MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/23/3336024

**The Sussex Barn, Thistleworth Farm, Worthing Road, Dial Post,
West Sussex RH13 8NR**

- 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 Tony Banks against the decision of Horsham District Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/23/0500.
 - The development proposed is conversion of existing barn to a residential dwelling with 2 storey extension and double garage and detached stable building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the development on the application form included reference to a detached stable building. No plans or other details of the stables were provided as part of the submission. However, I understand the stables were granted permission (retrospectively) in 2021, Ref DC/20/0653. That application also approved conversion of the barn to a dwelling. No details of the associated listed building consent, Ref DC/20/0654 were provided with the appeal submissions. However, the barn conversion has not been implemented and the Council contends that as the relevant pre-commencement conditions have not been discharged, that permission has lapsed. To assist my assessment of the proposal I requested copies of these decision notices.
3. Thistleworth Farm, a Grade II listed building, is situated immediately to the east of the appeal site and separated from it by a close boarded fence. The Sussex Barn is a timber clad structure and, due its proximity and previous association with Thistleworth Farm, is curtilage listed. Although the barn conversion would require listed building consent, there is no evidence that a separate application has been submitted to, or determined by, the Council.
4. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis that planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing barn to a dwelling, together with a two-storey extension which includes a double garage and a single-storey extension which would connect the barn to the larger extension. In doing so, I have had regard to the plans and the appellant's appeal statement which refer to a car port as opposed to an enclosed garage.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of The Sussex Barn, a curtilage listed building, and the setting of Thistleworth Farm, a Grade II listed building.

Reasons

Significance

6. Thistleworth Farm is an L-shaped 17th century, or earlier, timber-framed building. It has been re-fronted with red brick and is partly tile-hung on the first floor. The timbering with plaster and brick infill is exposed at the back. The house has a crow-stepped chimney breast on a stone base at its eastern end. As well as these features of architectural interest, the house would originally have been part of the rural economy working the surrounding land. As a consequence, it would have had associated outbuildings, one of which is The Sussex Barn. The listed building therefore derives its significance from its architectural features and its historic role in this part of Sussex. Its rural setting and outbuildings also contribute to its significance.
7. The Sussex Barn is a large historic structure which was previously ancillary to the farm. For this reason, even though it now lies within a separate plot, its status as a curtilage listed building remains. The barn has a large rectangular footprint and a tiled, hipped roof. The southern elevation is dominated by the expanse of a substantial catslide roof. Its timber-clad elevation is punctuated by a central door and two modest sized windows on either side. The northern elevation has three separately timber-clad sections with a wide opening within the central section. There are six high level windows which sit just below eaves level. These windows are of modest proportions and located well away from the central section of this elevation. Two windows to the right of the existing entrance provide light to the ground floor. The side elevations have no openings. Internally there is a wealth of original timber work.
8. The size, simple form, architectural details and materials used to construct this traditional Wealden barn have significance in their own right as typical features found in agricultural farm buildings dating from the 17th century. The barn's location and former functional connection with the farm, although separate from it and set back from its principal elevations, also contribute to the significance of the farmhouse as the principal listed building. The conservation of this historic barn therefore carries considerable importance and weight in my assessment.

Assessment

9. The proposal would change the appearance of the barn with the insertion of additional windows, rooflights and a large area of glazing in the central section of the northern elevation. Listed building consent would also be required for the internal alterations needed to provide accommodation on an introduced first floor. Changes of this nature were considered appropriate when the Council granted planning permission and listed building consent for the change of use in 2021, subject to a series of conditions to protect the significance of the heritage asset. Provided that details of all internal and external work to the barn were carefully controlled through conditions imposed on any application for listed building consent, I consider that its conversion to residential use would be acceptable in principle.

10. However, the current proposal goes significantly beyond a conversion of the existing building. It seeks to extend the accommodation with two additional buildings, one single-storey and the other two-storey. They would be connected to each other and the barn via glazed links. The single-storey building would have a small south facing room, but its principal purpose would be to connect the barn to a two-storey extension. This extension would comprise a double garage (or car port) with a bedroom and en-suite bathroom above. Both these new buildings would have half-hipped roofs. The two elements together would have a similar overall footprint to that of the original barn and would create an L-shaped form. The ridge of the two-storey element would be the same as that of the barn.
11. The combined extensions with their floor areas, height and mass would be excessively bulky and would unhelpfully compete with the traditional form and scale of the historic barn. The height of the buildings and the roof forms with their differing pitches would dominate rather than appearing subservient to the host property. Neither individually nor together would they integrate satisfactorily with the barn. On the contrary, they would appear as incongruous, modern insertions into the space around the barn resulting in a cluttered appearance. The layout would fail to respect the simple form and siting of the original structure causing a significant loss to its distinctive agricultural and vernacular character.
12. At present the open space around the barn enables its features and proportions to be appreciated as a stand-alone historic agricultural building in a rural setting. The proposal would encroach into this space considerably eroding the setting of the barn. The harm to the character of the barn and its setting would also diminish the historic association between the barn and Thistleworth Farm as the principal listed building. This would be the case even though the single-storey element would be attached to the western elevation of the barn, furthest from the shared boundary with the farm, and the remaining elevations would not be physically affected by the extension. The separation distance between Thistleworth Farm and the garage/car port would be insufficient to mitigate the harm caused by introducing a tall, bulky building into the farm's setting and which would be so close to its historic, ancillary agricultural building.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the significance of The Sussex Barn, a curtilage listed building and the setting of Thistleworth Farm, a Grade II listed building. This would be contrary to the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act), which requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. There would also be conflict with Policies 32, 33 and 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) 2015. These policies, amongst other things, seek to sustain and enhance the historic environment ensuring that development integrates with its surroundings and the historic landscape.

Heritage balance

14. The harm I have identified to these designated heritage assets would, in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), be less than substantial. Nevertheless, any harm to their significance arising from their alteration or development within their setting requires clear and convincing justification. It is therefore necessary for me to weigh this harm against the public benefits of the proposal, as required by paragraph 208 of the Framework.
15. The proposal would create a good-sized family home. An additional home would be a modest public benefit which could also secure the long-term future

maintenance of the barn. However, it is evident from the planning permission and listed building consent granted in 2021 that a conversion of the barn to provide the public benefit of a modest-sized family home could be achieved without the need for extensions.

16. The provision of an extra bedroom, a double garage/car port and the opportunity for additional bathrooms within the barn conversion would be private benefits for the occupants. In this case the public benefits of the scheme as a whole do not outweigh the identified harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets. This leads me to conclude that the proposal is unacceptable.

Other Matters

17. I am aware that the appellant revised the proposals in the hope of overcoming concerns raised by the Council through pre-application discussions. However, the manner in which the current application was determined and any exchange of correspondence beforehand, is not a matter for me to address, which is confined to a consideration of the planning merits of the appeal proposal.
18. The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (5YHLS). In these circumstances the test of paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged. However, the application of policies in the Framework that protect heritage assets [one of the areas referred to in footnote 7 to paragraph 11 d) i)] provides a clear reason for refusing the development. Consequently, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply to this case.
19. The Council also refused the scheme because insufficient information had been provided to demonstrate that the proposal would not contribute towards the existing adverse effect on the Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar sites arising from increased water abstraction. However, as I am dismissing the appeal due to its failure to conserve designated heritage assets, it has not been necessary for me to address this matter further.

Conclusion

20. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations, including the 1990 Act and the advice of the Framework, that indicate the decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
21. For this reason, the appeal is dismissed.

S M Holden
INSPECTOR