



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2024

by C Harding BA (Hons) PGCert PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 DECEMBER 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P3040/W/24/3343071

Holly Farm, Bassingfield Lane, Bassingfield, Nottinghamshire NG12 2LG

- 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 John Croft on behalf of Crofts Development Ltd against the decision of Rushcliffe Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00255/FUL.
 - The development proposed is alteration, conversion and extension of the existing farm buildings to create five dwellings. Demolition of minor ancillary buildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The revised National Planning Policy Framework '(the Framework)' was published on 12 December 2024. I have considered the changes and as they are not material to the proposal, further comments were not sought from the parties. I have, however, determined the appeal having regard to the revised Framework.
3. The Council included a reason for refusal relating to the effect of the proposed development upon protected species as a result of insufficient information being provided. In this regard, the content of the subsequently provided bat survey is not challenged by the Council, which has indicated that it is no longer pursuing this reason for refusal.
4. I have no other information before me to suggest that the conclusions reached in the bat survey are not reasonable. On this basis, I agree with these conclusions and consider that there would be no harm to protected species. Accordingly, and as this issue is no longer in dispute, I have not considered it further in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. Holly Farm is a former farm complex located on a corner site within the small settlement of Bassingfield. The settlement comprises several collections of current or former agricultural buildings along with residential properties. The settlement is surrounded by open countryside, although to the south is Nottingham City Airport.

7. Holly Farm itself comprises the former farmhouse and two long ranges of agricultural buildings addressing a cobbled yard, linked at their northern extent by a threshing barn. Two further agricultural buildings, including one with a Belfast truss roof construction largely infill the space between the farmhouse and the longer ranges.
8. It is common ground that Holly Farm, at one time, formed part of the estate of Earl Manvers. There is circumstantial evidence to indicate that the farmhouse may have been designed by the prominent architect William Wilkins, as payments were made to him in relation to buildings on the land on which the farm now stands between 1799 and 1814.
9. The proposal would result in the conversion of a number of the buildings on the site to residential use. In most cases, the level of physical intervention would be limited, although the proposal would lead to the loss of the cow barn and associated Belfast truss roof. The main parties appear to agree on the acceptability of these works. However, the proposal would also lead to further extensions to the farmhouse, and it is these that form the focus of the dispute between the main parties.
10. The farmhouse has clearly been altered over time, and there is some doubt as to its original form. The appellant's identification of the building as being previously extended, and then extended again is reasonable. The external walls are rendered, and it is evident from provided historic photographs that some traditional elements, such as blind windows have been lost over time, and other elements such as the dormer windows added. Nevertheless, there are elements still visible that have a clearly considered form and poise.
11. The proposed alterations to the farmhouse would further extend the building to the north-west at two-storey height. An additional two-storey extension would be constructed to the south-east, on the elevation of the farmhouse that addresses the road.
12. The farmhouse is accessed from a point in the western elevation which addresses the access drive, rather than the road. This elevation includes a somewhat subservient northern range. Despite not containing the current entrance to the building, and effectively forming a side elevation to the house, the south elevation, which addresses the road, has an elegant balance. However, its relatively limited width in comparison to the western elevation and its northern range, and lack of entrance door means that it currently appears as a side, and therefore secondary, elevation.
13. The extensions proposed would result in a substantial addition to the southern elevation, giving it a wider extent, and further extension to the already sizeable northern range. Together these extensions would result in an appreciably larger building than exists now.
14. The widening of this southern elevation, along with a roof height to reflect the existing, would increase its status when viewed from the road. However, whilst the elevation would be traditionally balanced, the fenestration and lack of entrance means that the elevational treatment would not be reflective of the status that its width and height would suggest.
15. The extension to the northern range would lead to this element of the house, which currently has a subservient roof height, being of substantial projection to

the point that it would become the dominant part of the overall western elevation. The result would be a principal elevation dominated by a secondary element of the structure.

16. Taking these elements together, the overall composition of the farmhouse, the evolution of which is already unclear, would become further confused and difficult to read. The proposals would not reinforce the existing remaining architectural form that the building currently exhibits, and the original elements of the building would become further lost within the significant level of extension, both existing and proposed, that would result.
17. This would be exacerbated by the extension of the north range to join the existing cart shed, further reducing the ability to effectively read the evolution of the farmhouse, which at present stands largely separate to this range of agricultural buildings.
18. I acknowledge that the advice in the Rushcliffe Residential Design Guide ('the RRDG') in relation to extensions dominating the original dwelling makes reference to avoiding the infilling of gaps between houses, which I accept would not occur here. Nevertheless, the overall principle of subservience is a sound one, not simply restricted to more common arrangements of dwellings within more urban settings.
19. I am also mindful of the advice within the RRDG in relation to the setting back, or down, of a side extension. While generally sound advice in many situations, this is not necessarily an appropriate approach in all cases, and there will be situations where another form of design approach may be appropriate.
20. However, even if I were to agree that this situation was such an instance, the overall architectural composition of the proposed southern elevation extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the farmhouse when read as a whole and in the context of the other proposed alterations.
21. Overall, the proposal alterations would further unbalance the farmhouse and in doing so, harm the overall composition of the farm complex on a prominent a corner site within the settlement.
22. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy 10 of the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy and Policy 1 of the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies. Together and amongst other factors, these policies state that new development should make a positive contribution to the public realm, and be of a scale, height, massing and design which is sympathetic to the character and appearance of neighbouring buildings and the surrounding area.

Other Matters

23. Even if I were to agree that the proposal would not lead to harm to non-designated heritage assets, highway safety, or biodiversity, or that the level of amenity space for future residents would be acceptable, these would be neutral factors which would not weigh in favour of the proposal.

Planning Balance

24. There is no suggestion that the Council has an insufficient supply of suitable housing sites. Nevertheless, the proposal would provide a boost to the housing supply. Given the housing supply position and small scale of the proposed scheme, I afford this moderate weight as a benefit of the proposal.
25. It is stated that the buildings on the appeal site are deteriorating and have been subject to vandalism. Following my site inspection, I have no reason to doubt this. Bringing the historic buildings on the site back into active use though renovation would assist in arresting such decline. However, as it has not been shown that a suitable redevelopment of the site could not be achieved by other, less harmful means than the scheme which is before me, I therefore find that these factors weigh in favour of the scheme only to a minor extent.
26. Weighing against these benefits is the harm to the character and appearance of the area which would result from the proposal, which would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. I afford this harm and conflict significant weight.

Conclusion

27. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Harding

INSPECTOR