



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 May 2025

by **Eleni Marshall BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/D/25/3360944

The Old Barn, Lenborough Road, Gawcott, Buckinghamshire, MK18 4BP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs H Pritchard-Law against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application reference is 24/03423/APP.
 - The development proposed is single storey extension and fenestration alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have utilised the Council's description of the proposal as I find it describes the proposal more concisely.
3. This appeal is accompanied by an application for costs which is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located off an access track off Lenborough Road and whilst there are a number of converted barns within the vicinity the site stands within the open countryside. The barn is set within a substantial plot, which includes a garden area to the south and with an area of hardstanding is used for car parking. The appeal site, as a result of its location, is not visible from the road. The dwelling is single storey and has been previously extended¹ to add a single storey pitched roof extension to the northern elevation of the barn and a pitched roof car port and an attached workshop. The extension was noted, by the previous Inspector, to be large in scale but was considered to be a subordinate extension that would not dominate the existing building (as a result of a lower eave and ridge height than the existing (original) barn. The Inspector also confirmed their observation that a number of other barns within the vicinity of the appeal site were also 'L shaped'.
6. The previous extension, to the north, has been constructed with both a lower eaves and ridge height. The ridge height of the current proposal would not exceed that of the original barn, but it does propose to match, for part, the ridge height of the

¹ 18/02166/APP (allowed via appeal APP/J0405/D/18/3217964)

original section of the barn/host dwelling combined with the extension itself being in the region of 9.4m x 5.5m. I find that this would result in the proposal failing to be a clearly subordinate extension to the host dwelling. The appellant sets out that the submitted proposed drawings show the roof line of the proposed extension is set lower than the existing roof, however, I find this not to be the case with part of the extension showing a proposed ridge height at the same height of the original barn with the exception of the proposed link roof element (stated to be in the region of 300mm lower). If the extension is 'slightly lower' than the ridge line, as stated by the appellant, then the difference between the existing and proposed ridge heights is negligible and thus insufficient to show clear subservience to the host dwelling.

7. Whilst the footprint of the proposal would be smaller than the original footprint, I find that it is a relevant consideration that the host dwelling has already been the subject of a large extension to the north and that the current proposal would, therefore, result in cumulative extensions which I find would alter the form of the former agricultural building. The proposal may well equate to in the region of 42 sq./m compared to 162 sq./m of existing footprint, however, the existing footprint stated is noted to include the existing extension to the north. On this basis, I find the cumulative extensions, due to the footprint of the proposal as submitted, would result in a sprawling dwelling at odds with the original appearance of the dwelling which was, originally, a more compact linear building.
8. On approach to the barn, I find that the extension would result in a visually dominant feature compared to the existing dwelling where the existing, lower, extension is more discretely located, and subordinate, to the rear on the north elevation. The lower ridge height and subordination was the reasoning behind the previous Inspector's support for that proposal. Whilst the appellant contends that the proposal would moderate what they consider to be a brutal flank wall of the original barn, the flank wall is still part of the original dwelling and its character as a simple, utilitarian, structure. I do not find that the proposal would safeguard the host dwelling and that, cumulatively, the extensions would be significant in the context of the original barn/building.
9. The Vale of Aylesbury Design Guide 2023 (the Design Guide) is noted in the context of the extracts provided within the appellant statement of case. Whilst the proposal may be consistent with some elements of this guidance, and I note the submissions confirm use of red brick to match existing and slate roof tiles which would be character appropriate for the dwelling, I find that the proposed height and footprint would also be combined with flush mounted triple rooflights, to both sides of the roof within the link, as well as extensive glazing within the link element and the corner of the proposed extension. Whilst more modern designs can, in some cases, work successfully in contrast to traditional barns I find that in this case the glazing and design would exacerbate the proposals bulk, scale and massing in the context of the host dwelling. The provision of a link type element, with the proposed rooflights (with there being no other roof lights in the existing building), would further add to the complexity of the proposal at roof level compared to the existing simple form.
10. The appellant includes plans from application reference 95/00729/APP which is stated to be the original permission for a dwelling in this location. I note the appellant's comments regarding the original proposal being reconstruction and extension of the timber field barn into a domestic dwelling and not, therefore, a barn conversion as a

result of the reconstruction works outlined above the included plans. Regardless or not as to whether the site is considered by the Council to be an old or historic vernacular barn, I find that, from the plans before me, 95/00729/APP was clear in its permission for a dwelling that was a single storey, linear, building akin to that which historically stood there as an animal field shelter and which was a rural building. The original dwelling was therefore granted permission for the resulting residential dwelling to be a simple, utilitarian, structure.

11. Even if I did not consider the proposal to be an old or historic barn as stated by the appellant and considered the proposal against standard policies, relating to extensions to properties within the context of rural development in the countryside, the application of policies of that nature still generally that extensions be subordinate and appropriate to a host dwelling in basic terms. Furthermore, the appellant's assertion that the proposal should not be considered as an old or historic vernacular barn appears to then be slightly at odds with the approach as to the inclusion of extracts from, and commentary as to consistency with, Historic England's guide to adapting traditional farm buildings.
12. Whilst the original form of the barn has already been altered the previous Inspector noted that a number of other barns within the vicinity of the appeal site were also 'L shaped' contributing to the acceptability of the initial extension. I note imagery included by the appellant within their statement of case (figure 1 and 2) showing plan form barns which are stated to be within five miles of the appeal site. Five miles is a large, even in a rural context, and I do not find that the proposal could be reasonably be appreciated within the general context of an area of this size. I find that the barns within the more immediate locality are those which the appeal site would be reasonably considered are, generally, 'L shaped' or 'U shaped'.
13. I have also no further evidence or information before me as to the background for the barns shown in figure 1 and 2 respectively of the appellant's statement of case in terms of their original form and/whether these have, for example, evolved by extension(s) akin to the proposals within this appeal. Even if I had found that a 'Z shaped' footprint in its basic form/in principle was generally acceptable, in terms of character and appearance of the area, this is an entirely separate matter to the impact I have identified in terms of a lack of subordination to the host dwelling itself due to the scale of the proposal as currently submitted.
14. The fact that proposal is not visible from the street scene is acknowledged but character, and appearance, are separate matters within character being the intrinsic qualities that make an area. In this case whilst there may limited visual impact within the open countryside, but a lack of visibility is separate to character and, in turn, the character and appearance of the host dwelling itself. Overall, I appreciate and acknowledge the appellant's reasoning for the proposal in terms of creating a better entrance to the property and functional space, however, for the reasons outlined above I do not find that the proposal would be subordinate in scale in a manner which relates to the massing and character of the original barn.
15. The proposal would be contrary to Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2021 (LP) Policy C1 which outlines that any extension should be modest in scale and subordinate to the main building and LP Policy BE2 which requires that proposals respect and complement the physical characteristics of the site including the scale and local distinctiveness and vernacular character in terms of proportions. The proposal would also be contrary to the Design Guide in terms of the guidance outlining that

the original building should remain the dominant element of the property whether you have one extension or several. It goes on to advise that the effect of any extension should not overwhelm the house from any given viewpoint as well as that once an extension begins to exceed or match the size of the original building then the architectural integrity of the original structure tends to become lost.

16. The proposal would also be contrary to National Planning Policy Framework 2024 Which requires that developments be sympathetic to the surrounding built environment and the National Design Guide 2021 in so far as it requires that development responds positively to the features of the site itself including the existing built development including layout, form and scale.

Other Matters

17. I note that comment has been made, by both parties, in relation to trees on site however this did not form a refusal reason and, had the appeal been acceptable in all other regards, such matters could have been dealt with via condition alongside any landscaping proposals.
18. Reference is made to an approved application (24/02866/APP) stated to be for a two-storey extension to an existing barn with extracts from the Council's delegated report quoted. Whilst consistency is key to maintaining confidence within the planning system each case should be considered on its own merits. Based upon the limited information before me (a floor plan) I am unable to attribute weight to the decision at the appeal site. I have no information as to, for example, site context or elevational drawings or information relating to the original dwelling in order to fully understand the reasoning for the decision made.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons outlined above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Marshall

INSPECTOR