



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2022

by Paul Singleton BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/22/3290570

Loft Shay Farm, Clitheroe Road, Ribchester, PR3 2YQ

- 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 Paul Towler against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2021/1022, dated 1 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of and single storey extension to agricultural barn to form one dwelling and erection of a detached garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Planning permission for the conversion of the barn on the appeal site to form a new dwelling was granted in September 2021 (Reference 3/2021/0670). That permission has not been implemented and there has been no lawful commencement of a residential use. For this reason, I agree with the Council that the appealed application should properly be treated as a full application for an alternative scheme for the barn conversion and I have amended the description of development accordingly.
3. The Council's approach in determining the application as a revised proposal for the conversion of the barn was explained to the appellant before the application was refused. I therefore see no disadvantage to either party arising from my considering the appeal on this basis. The appellant was requested to provide further information about the family's personal circumstances that are referred to in the appeal statement and the Council was given the opportunity to comment on that additional information. I have taken the additional information received in response to this request into account in my determination of the appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect on the historic character and appearance of the appeal building as a former agricultural building and of the surrounding landscape within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

5. The agricultural barn is of traditional construction and appearance with random coursed stone walls and timber doors and windows, many of which are within stone surrounds. It has an asymmetrical pitched roof clad in slate tiles. The barn has a large entrance door on the front (south eastern) elevation with two projecting wings on either side and the front roof slope projecting over that entrance. The elevation to the north west has three door openings at ground floor (seemingly not use) and narrow ventilation slits at the upper level. The plain elevation to the south east is visible at close quarters but is obscured in longer views by a more modern (1970s), open fronted portal framed building. The north east elevation is screened from view by two modern extensions built in concrete blockwork.
6. The lean-to extension proposed on the north western side would be of single storey form but would extend along much of that elevation. The extension would be subservient to the barn in terms of its height and scale. Due to its scale and siting it would, however, result in this elevation of the barn losing its existing simple form and appearance and would transform the solid to void ratio within the elevation. The existing openings at ground floor would be lost or obscured and the proposed elevations also indicate the loss of the ventilation slits at the upper level.
7. Nearly half of the side elevation to the extension would comprise full height glazing within large, bi-folding doors, with an additional window alongside this and a new modern window inserted in the barn at first floor level. These new openings would bear no relationship with the proportions of the existing openings in the barn and would become a dominant feature of this radically altered elevation. The three large windows proposed in the north east elevation of the extension would also help to mark this out as a modern domestic extension to a traditional agricultural building. When seen from the south west, the side elevation would read as an incongruous addition that is inconsistent with the built form of the host building.
8. The proposed siting of the double garage would ensure that this is physically detached from the barn, thereby exposing more of the barn's south eastern elevation and allowing this to be better appreciated. Although the height of this element of the proposal would render it subservient to the barn its footprint, at around half that of the original barn is quite excessive. The timber cladding proposed for the external walls of the garage would not be in keeping with the stone elevation of the barn.
9. The proposed extension would not be seen from the road. However, this extension and the external alterations to the building would be readily apparent to all of those who use the public footpath that passes through the site, even allowing for the proposed minor diversion of that footpath. When seen by walkers approaching across the field from the north, the single storey extension and new window at the upper level would appear as obviously modern and incongruous additions to the barn. The lean-to extension and external alterations would cause significant detriment to the historic character and appearance of the traditional stone barn. Due to its size and proposed materials, the proposed double garage would add to that harm. Given its location within the open countryside and on the route of a public footpath, the harm to the barn's historic character and appearance would also reduce the

contribution that it makes to the rural character of the surrounding landscape which forms part of the AONB.

10. Policy DMH4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2008-2028) (CS) provides support for the conversion of barns to dwellings but requires that the building: (1) must be capable of conversion without the need for extensive building or major alterations which would adversely affect the character and appearance of the building, and (2) be of sufficient size to provide the necessary living accommodation without the need for further extensions that would harm its character and appearance. The proposed extension and external alterations would adversely affect the historic character and appearance of the barn and, in combination with the detached garage, the extension goes beyond what is reasonably necessary to facilitate the conversion of the building for residential use. The proposal, therefore, conflicts with Policy DMH4.
11. My conclusions on these matters are supported by the fact that planning permission was applied for and granted in 2016, and again in 2021, for a residential conversion which did not include new extensions or outbuildings nor propose significant external alterations to the barn. The appeal statement does not contend that the previously approved scheme would not provide a suitable dwelling. Rather, the revised proposals appear to have been driven by the appellant's preferences as to the layout and use of the internal space. As the previously approved scheme also included the demolition of all of the modern extensions to the original barn, the revised proposal offers no additional benefits in terms of better revealing its historic character.
12. In addition to the conflict with CS Policy DMH4 the proposal would conflict with the Policy DMG2 requirement that development in the open countryside should be in keeping with the character of the landscape. The harm to the surrounding landscape also gives rise to a conflict with Key Statement EN2 which seeks to protect the landscape and character of the AONB and requires that any development should contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.

Other Matters

13. Due regard must be had to the particular circumstances and needs of the appellant's family member and I acknowledge that the form of development proposed could bring particular benefits for the family in terms of his care. However, it seems to me that the revised proposals for the barn conversion are driven in part by the appellant's preference for a larger open plan living area as well as by the wish to provide the particular benefits referred to in the additional information submitted. I also have no evidence to show that those benefits could not be delivered without so significant a revision to the conversion proposals. Whilst I give the claimed benefits moderate weight I do not consider that these are sufficient to outweigh the harm to the historic character and appearance of the barn and to the rural landscape or the conflict with the development plan.
14. The appellant has referred to examples of other barn conversions in the area where significant glazed openings have been approved. Without full details about these proposals I am unable to conclude that they are directly comparable with the appeal scheme or that they form a precedent in the circumstances of this case.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Singleton

INSPECTOR