



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 June 2013

by Geoffrey Hill BSc DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 17 June 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/A/2191626

Lanshaw Barn, Woodhouse Lane, Slaidburn, Clitheroe BB7 3AH

- 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 A Rigby against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2012/0089, dated 19 January 2012, was refused by notice dated 21 September 2012.
 - The development proposed is conversion of barn to residential unit.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is this appeal is the effect of the proposed conversion on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The barn is in a remote location, over 1 mile north of the small settlement of Slaidburn. It is in a very rural setting, approached by a narrow, single track lane. The barn stands in isolation to the east side of the lane, with no other buildings within 100 metres. The site is within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
4. The application was refused on the basis that it was seen to conflict with policies of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan (DWLP). The Local Plan was adopted in 2004 and, having regard to paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), its policies may not necessarily carry full weight in the determination of this appeal.
5. A core planning principle of the NPPF is to promote sustainable development. This includes avoiding isolated homes in the countryside, but would allow for the reuse of a redundant or disused building where this would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting¹. NPPF goes on to state that the planning system should protect and enhance valued landscapes and, in particular, great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs – which have the highest status of protection². In the light of this national policy statement, the objectives of the policies of the

¹ Paragraph 55; National Planning Policy Framework

² Paragraphs 109 and 115; National Planning Policy Framework

DWLP referred to by the Council in its decision do accord with the NPPF and can be seen to be relevant in this appeal.

6. The proposed conversion would introduce considerable changes to both the appearance of this building and its surroundings. The building is suffering a degree of dereliction, the walls are damaged and an area of the roof has collapsed. With this degree of dereliction, the proposed scheme would require a considerable amount of reconstruction; possibly to the point where it would constitute an entirely new building. Although the proposed scheme would not result in any physical enlargement of the building, the works would re-open doors and window openings presently closed or unused, and introduce new windows and doors where none currently exist. The present open-fronted storage bay under the lean-to roof would be enclosed and incorporated into the living space of the dwelling.
7. Furthermore, some of the detailing would not correspond with the style or character of the present building: this includes using an arched lintel over the main east elevation opening, where there is presently a straight lintel, the introduction of roof-lights, and a continuous range of windows in the north elevation which is unrelated to the original architecture of the barn, or any other vernacular building tradition in this locality. The character of the building would be changed from a simple, perhaps understated, vernacular stone barn with attached open storage bay into a dwelling of some substance.
8. The incorporation of the surrounding field into an extensive (0.29 hectares) garden would also significantly change the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings. What is presently down to rough grass or pasture would take on a domestic character. Apart from the creation of an access and associated drive and hard standing, there are likely to be enclosing fences or hedges, lawns, patio area, shrub and flower bed planting, and a range of domestic paraphernalia such as washing lines, garden furniture and perhaps children's play equipment. It is likely that, once established, there would be the subsequent (and entirely reasonable) wish to introduce outbuildings such as a garage, sheds and similar structures. All of this would be very incongruous and would not be in keeping with the strong, rugged rural (ie undeveloped) character of this part of Woodhouse Lane.
9. The changes to the appearance of the building and domestication of its surroundings would not serve to conserve or enhance the scenic beauty of the AONB. The area was designated as an AONB on account of its value as an amenity for the enjoyment of the public. The appeal site is very visible from the public domain, both from Woodhouse Lane and from the nearby public footpaths. Being so conspicuous, the proposed conversion would significantly harm amenity value of the AONB.
10. Paragraph 55 of NPPF indicates that conversion of redundant buildings may be acceptable in isolated rural locations where there are special circumstances, but none of the listed circumstances apply in this case. It is not argued that it is required to meet the essential needs of a rural worker, the barn is not listed as a heritage asset and, as discussed above, it would not lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting.
11. I note it is claimed that there is no viable agricultural use for the barn and that without a new use it is likely to fall into total dereliction. Without further and detailed evidence it is not possible to say if this is the inevitable

consequence of dismissing this appeal. However, even if that would be so, such an outcome would cause less harm to the AONB than the proposed scheme.

12. The Council is also concerned that permission for the scheme proposed in this appeal could establish an undesirable precedent for further conversions. It is a well-established principle that all planning applications are determined on their own merits, according to the development plan policies. A decision in this appeal would not lead inevitably to an approval or rejection of any other proposal for a barn conversion either here or elsewhere. I do not consider that concerns over precedent arise in this case.
13. Drawing all of the above points together, I conclude that the proposed conversion would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area, contrary to the objectives of NPPF and to DWLP policies G1, ENV1, H16 and H17. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

Geoffrey Hill

INSPECTOR