



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 March 2014

by Matthew Birkinshaw BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 31 March 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/14/2213900

Neddy Barn, Neddy Lane, Billington, Lancashire, BB7 9ND

- 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 Ms Louise Entwistle against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
- The application Ref 3/2013/1013, dated 22 November 2013, was refused by notice dated 3 February 2014.
- The development proposed is to increase the height of the existing barn arch opening.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted to increase the height of the existing barn arch opening at Neddy Barn, Neddy Lane, Billington, Lancashire, BB7 9ND in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3/2013/1013, dated 22 November 2013, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plan: Proposed Alterations to Front Elevation.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the alterations hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property.

Reasons

3. The appeal proposal would increase the height of the existing barn arch opening from roughly 3.6m to approximately 4.8m, taking it to a position just below the eaves. Given that this arched opening is likely to be an original feature of the converted barn I appreciate the Council's concerns that altering it could change the legibility and character of the building. The introduction of additional glazing flush with the east-facing elevation would also be likely to reflect more sunlight during certain parts of the day and increase the prominence of the alteration.

4. However, the barn and its immediate neighbour are substantial stone buildings and their traditional, functional form and appearance are clearly evident. As a result, I am not persuaded that increasing the arched opening by only roughly 1.2m would create an unduly prominent feature sufficient to detract from this appearance, or cause any harm to the robust character of the building. For the same reasons, although the arch would extend to almost the eaves, it would not be out of proportion.
5. Furthermore, whilst the appeal property and its immediate neighbour have both been completed to a high standard and openings kept to a minimum, they do nonetheless contain domestic features such as the row of first floor windows adjacent to the arch and the roof light above it. Given the proximity of these features to the arch, the introduction of slightly more glazing would not be an unsympathetic or harmfully incongruous addition either.
6. I have also considered that the proposal would be highly visible from the adjacent Public Right of Way. However, although it occupies a semi-rural location facing onto open fields, the appeal property is located on the edge of Billington surrounded by a varied mix of residential properties. Viewed in the context of its surroundings, I am therefore not convinced that the limited nature of the alteration proposed would be out of place in the wider landscape. In this regard there is no conflict with the Council's *Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings Supplementary Planning Guidance* which directs that care should be taken with any scheme which is visible from public vantage points.
7. Concerns regarding the effect of the proposal on the significance of the former barn, which the Council identify as a non-designated heritage asset, are also noted. With this in mind I have taken into account guidance contained in '*The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A Guide to Good Practice*'. However, given the substantial size and scale of the appeal property, combined with the relatively limited increase in the height of the arch proposed, I am not convinced that the scheme would significantly erode its legibility. The setting of the barn would also be unchanged by increasing the height of the arch. Consequently, I consider that the alterations would not be materially harmful to the historic significance of the building or the contribution it makes to the wider character of the borough.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be of a high standard of design and would not have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host property. As a result, there is no conflict with *Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan Policy G1* which requires development proposals to provide high standards of building design. For the same reasons, there is also no conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to promote high quality design and maintain the significance of heritage assets. Both parties have also referred to emerging *Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policies DMG1 and DMH4*. Whilst only draft, I nonetheless find no conflict with their requirements, which also seek to promote high standards of design and retain the character of barns through their conversion. Finally, the Council has referred to saved *Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan Policies H15, H16 and H17*. However, these are concerned with the conversion of buildings. Whilst not strictly applicable to the scheme before me, I find no conflict with their aims and objectives either, which seek to promote high standards of design and reflect local character, especially in terms of form, proportions and window openings.

Other Matters

9. In reaching my conclusions against the main issue I have also noted the Council's comments that the roof light above the arch is already likely to provide the room below it with some degree of natural light. However, whether or not there is a need for the proposed alteration, this does not justify dismissing the appeal which would be acceptable, and accords with relevant development plan policy and guidance. Similarly, although the Council had informed the appellant of their concerns regarding new openings at the pre-application stage, I am required to consider the proposal before me on its specific merits, and I have determined the appeal on this basis.
10. Finally, I have also considered the publication of planning practice guidance. However, in light of the facts in this case its content does not alter my conclusions on the character and appearance of the host property.

Conclusion and Conditions

11. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.
12. Aside from the standard time limit condition it is also necessary to list the approved plan, for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. To ensure an adequate appearance, and in the interests of the character and appearance of the barn it is also necessary to require the external materials to match those used on the existing building.

Matthew Birkinshaw

INSPECTOR