



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 September 2012

by R E Watson BA (Hons)

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

Decision date: 2 October 2012

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/A/12/2177568

Lawson House Farm, Bolton-by-Bowland Road, Sawley, Clitheroe, BB7 4NJ

- 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 Mrs J H Porter against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2011/0729, dated 9th September 2011, was refused by notice dated 7th December 2011
 - The development proposed is the demolition of redundant agricultural sheds, conversion and extension of existing barns to 1 new dwelling and improvements to the existing access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of redundant agricultural sheds, conversion and extension of existing barns to 1 new dwelling and improvements to existing access at Lawson House Farm, Bolton-by-Bowland Road, Sawley, Clitheroe BB7 4NJ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3/2011/0729, dated 9th September 2011, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions which are set out in the Annex attached to this decision.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing buildings and the surrounding area. In reaching my decision I have paid careful attention to the planning history of the various proposed schemes of conversion. In particular, I have studied in detail the planning permission granted in November 2010 (Ref: 3/2010/0750) for the proposed conversion of the barns to one dwelling.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within an attractive rural area in an elevated setting overlooking the Ribble Valley. Selected "saved" policies of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan (LP) (1998) are relevant. As the site lies within the defined Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Policy ENV1 is of fundamental importance. This states that the landscape and character of the AONB will be protected conserved and enhanced. Other policies, specifically referring to barn conversion proposals (H15-18), have to be set in that context. In this case the respective arguments are concerned with matters of detailed design and there is a danger that, in focusing on these, the overall effect of the proposed scheme in terms of the conservation and enhancement of the defined Area is lost sight of. Consequently, before

assessing the detailed elements of the scheme which are at issue, I need to comment on the overall effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the building and its surroundings.

4. The main barns are surrounded by and, to a degree submerged by, a variety of agricultural buildings. Many have been added to the complex over time and have very little merit in terms of their design or appearance. The proposal seeks to remove many of these, thereby exposing the traditional buildings on which the development would focus. To my mind, the visual improvement to the farmhouse in the context of its immediate setting, and to the group of buildings when looked at as a whole from a greater distance, for example, when assessed from the Bolton-by-Bowland Road and as one approaches along the farm drive, would be significant. I consider that this would clearly enhance this part of the AONB. The earlier planning permissions granted demonstrate that the Council have grasped this fundamental consideration.
5. I turn now to the matters of detail addressed by the respective arguments of the two parties. In terms of the eastern elevation, the Council's concerns focus on the number of openings and the roof configuration of what would be a games room. I recognise the importance of minimising the number of openings in order to maintain the character of the barn. However, in this case most of the openings already exist. The two new windows at first-floor level replicate those on the western elevation and have been carefully designed to enhance the character of the building.
6. The proposed games room would sit where the existing lean-to shippon adjoins the building. This is a relatively recent extension with rendered brick walls and an asbestos-sheeted roof. This is to be replaced by a structure in a similar position, but the redevelopment is proposed with a double-pitched roof configuration, reflecting that of the main barn. There is an underlying logic to this change in design which I find acceptable.
7. On the north elevation the Council have some concerns about the first floor window openings and the scale of the central glazed opening. However, these are not new insertions, as the approved scheme contained openings in a similar position. I accept that they have altered slightly in their details. The first floor openings have been aligned to sit above the proposed ground floor windows and would be set back from the forward projections formed by the games room and garage. The central glazed area has been made slightly larger, but, as a consequence, the roof lights which were proposed on this elevation in the approved scheme have now been omitted. In my view, this would maintain the integrity of the roof face, thereby enhancing the overall character of the building.
8. Additional ground floor window and door openings are proposed on the south elevation which differ from the approved scheme. I acknowledge that, as this is the most private elevation and the number of new openings has to be minimised to maintain the character of the barn, this elevation is one where more light can be introduced to the dwelling through a limited number of new openings. However, the ground floor window uses a previous opening (identified by a lintel), whilst the design of the door at the north end reflects the character of others shown in the approved scheme. The previously approved roof opening inserted within the lean-to which projects from the main elevation is now proposed to be altered and slightly enlarged. This would permit the omission of roof lights elsewhere which would be of benefit.

9. I understand the Council's sensitivity to the proposed conversion maintaining the integrity of the barn's architectural character. However, I find that the changes now proposed to be made to the approved scheme are minor. Some would better reflect the existing character of the structure and none would detract from the aim of preserving and enhancing the character of the building and its surroundings. The proposed development has been carefully and skilfully designed with an inherent grasp of the fundamental features which make this building a potentially attractive element of the larger farm complex. I am satisfied that the proposal before me would chime with the requirements of the LP Policy ENV1 and would meet the provisions set out in the more detailed barn conversion policies H15-18. I conclude that the proposal would be wholly beneficial in terms of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the building and its surroundings.

Other Matters

10. In reaching this conclusion I have taken account of all other matters placed before me, including the detailed information of other conversion schemes approved within the Council's area. However, I have focused my assessment on the proposals before me and, consequently, these representations have not decisively influenced my considerations or led me to alter my conclusions on the main issue.

Conditions

11. I have carefully considered the question of appropriate conditions to be attached to the planning permission. The Council have drawn my attention to the schedule of conditions attached to the previous planning permission granted in November 2010. Having examined this, I am satisfied that those conditions remain relevant and necessary in terms of controlling this proposed development. Policies H17 and H18 of the Local Plan underpin the planning controls to be imposed on planning permissions for proposed barn conversions. I have taken account of their policy provisions in assessing the need for the conditions.
12. In order to ensure that any future developments to the building and its surrounds reflect its character, various permitted development rights which would normally apply to dwellings need to be removed, thereby enabling the Council to retain careful control over their design. Certain detailed design elements concerning the use of materials, which would be fundamental to maintaining the character of the building, require specific control by the Council and need a specific reference in the context of this formal planning permission.
13. Finally, the previously structural survey submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Local Plan Policy H16 continues to be relevant. Similarly, the bat and barn owl survey and report, together with its recommendations, requires addressing as part of the development. References to these two surveys must be made in the conditions in order to ensure that the development scheme carefully takes them into account.

RE Watson

Inspector

Annex

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision;
- 2) This permission shall relate to the development as shown on Drawing Nos: 2217.8 7 2217.9. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with those plans;
- 3) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2008 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order) any future extensions or external alterations to the dwelling, including any development within the cartilage as defined in Schedule 2, Part 1 Classes A-H and Part 2 Class A, shall not be carried out without the formal consent of the Local Planning Authority;
- 4) Precise specifications and samples of walling and roofing materials, and details of window and door surrounds, including materials to be used, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before their use in the proposed works;
- 5) All doors and window frames shall be in timber and painted heritage colour, as specified on the approved plans, and retained as such in perpetuity;
- 6) All new and replacement door and window head and sills shall be natural stone to match the existing;
- 7) All new and replacement gutters shall be black aluminium, as specified on the approved plans, supported on "drive-in" galvanised gutter brackets. Similarly, all rainwater pipes shall be black aluminium, as specified on the approved plans. These features shall be retained as such in perpetuity;
- 8) The Velux roof lights proposed shall be of the Conservation type, recessed with a flush fitting, and retained as such in perpetuity;
- 9) This permission shall relate to the conversion in accordance with the structural survey dated 2nd December 2009. Any deviation from the survey may need to be the subject of a further planning application;
- 10) Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, the development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the recommendations of the bat and barn owl survey and report previously submitted and dated 2nd December 2009;