



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 September 2012

by W G Fabian BA Dip Arch RIBA IHBC

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

Decision date: 18 September 2012

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/12/2181120

Old Chapel Barn, Preston Road, Alston, Preston PR3 3BL

- 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 Lee Dolman against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2012/0325 was refused by notice dated 23 May 2012.
 - The development proposed is retrospective application for the insertion of a window to the front gable elevation. Resubmission of application 3/2011/0779P.
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Procedural Matter

1. Notwithstanding the description shown above, taken from the appeal form and the Council's decision notice, it is clear from both parties' submissions that the proposed window would replace the existing one. As the proposal has, therefore, not already taken place, the application is not retrospective. I shall consider the appeal on this basis and amend the description accordingly.

Decision

2. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the insertion of a window to the front gable elevation at Old Chapel Barn, Preston Road, Alston, Preston PR3 3BL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3/2012/0325, dated 31 March 2012, 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 materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Front Elevation – Diagram A, Proposed First Floor Plan.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to an existing residential barn conversion, originally granted planning permission in 2008 for office use, with a subsequent change of use to two dwellings authorised in 2010. The gable window subject to this appeal would replace a larger window that has been installed without authorisation, as part of the residential conversion. An appeal against refusal of planning permission for this current window was dismissed in April 2011.
5. The existing stone building has a double gabled form set side-on to the main road. The lower, smaller one is the location for the window and is closer to and divided by only a few metres from the roadside behind a dry-stone wall. The building is considered locally to be a non-designated Heritage Asset of historic interest, which shows its development in response to changing agricultural practices. As such, the government's recently published National Planning Policy Framework confirms that the effect of the proposal on its significance should be taken into account in determining the application.
6. A first floor window has been installed in this previously blank small side gable. It includes dressed stone lintel, cill and side jambs which match the adjacent pre-existing agricultural openings and the window frame matches other adjacent ones in the barn conversion. However, the window is as large, if not larger, than the existing opening in the adjoining gable and, when seen together with this pre-existing one, it appears out of proportion to the smaller gable and out of character with the barn building, as set out in the Appeal Decision (Ref APP/T2350/D/11/2147036) referred to above. I would add that due to its width the outer corners of the stone lintel create narrow 'pinch points' close to the roof verges that accentuate its size and awkward appearance.
7. By contrast, the proposed window would be narrower (it would be some 100mm less than the existing width recorded by the Council,). This would be a reduction of around 13%, enough to significantly alter its relationship to the surrounding gable wall and remove the uncomfortable pinch points; it would reflect the smaller size of this gable compared to the adjacent one. As a result, the proposed window would sit comfortably within its gable and both windows would appear in proportion to the overall building, thus reflecting the local vernacular and conserving the former character of the barn in accordance with policies ENV3 and H17 of the District Wide Local Plan, 1998, (LP).
8. Whilst there was previously no window within this gable during its former barn use, the insertion of a window for the approved dwelling reflects the changing pattern of use over time and, given the more acceptable proportions now proposed, would not look out of keeping within what is now clearly a residential context.
9. My attention has been drawn to a barn conversion nearby, but not within sight of the appeal building. That building is of a wholly different size and layout to the appeal barn. Moreover, it seems, from the photograph submitted, that there may have been a previous roadside gable window – unlike in the appeal property. Accordingly, it has little bearing on my decision in this case, which I have reached on its individual merits and the site specific circumstances of the case. The benefit that arises from the proposed window in respect of the provision of emergency egress required to make the gable bedroom habitable, adds only minimally in favour of the proposal.

10. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding area. As such it would comply with LP policy G1, which expects a high standard of building design.
11. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.
12. Conditions requiring the proposal to match existing materials and finishes and requiring compliance with the proposal drawings are necessary to ensure visual continuity with the building and in the interests of proper planning.

Wenda Fabian

Inspector