
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18th October 2013

by Jonathan G King BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1 November 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/A/13/2201075

Carr Meadow Barn, Carr Lane, Balderstone, Blackburn BB2 7LN

- 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 Mark & Mrs Victoria Haston against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2012/1040, dated 20th November 2012 was refused by notice dated 15th January 2013.
 - The development proposed is an equine storage building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for an equine storage building at Carr Meadow Barn, Carr Lane, Balderstone, Blackburn BB2 7LN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3/2012/1040, dated 20th November 2012, and the plans submitted with it, 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 plans: The location plan; and Drawing No MH/12/01.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of Carr Meadow Barn and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The Officer's report on the proposal indicates that there is no objection to the principle of a building for the proposed use: it is the visual impact which is said to conflict with local planning policies.
4. Carr Meadow Barn is a stone cottage converted from a barn of some age. Subsequently, a small lean-to extension has been added and a single garage of stone construction has been built within the restricted residential curtilage. Just outside the curtilage, a timber stable block has been erected to the south and a sizeable manege laid out to the east. The appeal proposal is for a storage building which would be located between the cottage and the stables, on land presently fenced off as a small paddock, outside the defined curtilage.

5. Local planning policy is contained in the Districtwide Local Plan (DLP), adopted in 1998. According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), development plan policies adopted before 2004 should be given due weight according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. Policy G1 sets out a range of criteria against which all development proposals should be judged. Of particular relevance are (a) sympathy of the development with existing and proposed land uses in terms of size, intensity and nature; (e) appearance and relationship to its surroundings; and (h) use of materials sympathetic to the character of the area. However, the policy contains no specific reference to non-designated heritage assets. Policy ENV3 adds that development in the open countryside outside the AONB should be in keeping with the character of the landscape area and reflect local vernacular, scale, style, features and building materials.
6. Policy H17 relates to the conversion of buildings and strictly speaking does not apply to the proposed development. Nonetheless, Part (g) of the supporting text says that converted buildings should retain their open setting, with the curtilage remaining open and uncluttered. In this case, the building would be set within the existing group of buildings, albeit outside the defined curtilage. The effect would be to consolidate the group, but would not lead to the sort of cluttered appearance which the policy seeks to avoid.
7. The reasons for refusal also references Policies DMG1, DME2, DME4 & DMH4 from the Submission draft Core Strategy, the Examination of which has been suspended. It does not form part of the development plan and in view of its draft, untested status, I do not afford it any significant weight.
8. The Council places emphasis on the fact that the cottage in former days was an isolated field barn and should be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset, which the NPPF defines as *"a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest"*. It says in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
9. In my view, the barn as converted has limited historical interest, in that it retains some residual form and character of a traditional field barn. But its importance is slight, particularly in view of the changes that were made to it when it was converted to residential use, by the erection of the garage and the stables and the laying out of the manege. The building is not Listed and the property does not lie in a conservation area. I am not aware that it has any particular architectural or historic value, other than the fact that it was once in agricultural use and may have been typical of isolated field barns of its age. But since those characteristics have been largely lost, its significance as a heritage asset is small. The converted building, when viewed from the access driveway from Carr Lane and from the footpaths close to the property, is clearly in residential use. This change in character is emphasised by the associated development, the equestrian facilities and by the access drive, ornamented by flower beds
10. The general locality is indeed isolated. But if the barn once stood alone, it does so no longer. Apart from the directly associated development, it stands in a location where there are a number of other dwellings: Pewter Cottage,

adjoining the access entrance; Beacon Cottage on the other side of Carr Lane; and others a short distance along the lane to the north. It is therefore one of a scatter of buildings, mostly residential, in reasonably close proximity.

11. I agree with the Council that the proposed storage building would appear as an outbuilding to the cottage rather than being ancillary to the stables, which would be its intended function. It would be bulkier and more permanent-looking than the stables; and, located between them and the cottage, it would tend to consolidate the group of buildings visually. It would not be an insubstantial structure. However, though about as long as the cottage, it would be significantly narrower and, being single-storey, lower so that it would be subservient in scale. The use of stone and slate would match both the cottage and the garage; and, in terms of design, it would appear similar to a traditional implement shed which one might reasonably expect to be associated with a rural dwelling, if not a field barn. Notwithstanding its visibility across open land from footpaths, it would not be readily perceptible from Carr Lane or have any substantial impact on the rural character of the locality. The criticisms made by my colleague, who dismissed an appeal in 2012 [ref: APP/T2350/A/11/2166310] in relation to a store to the north of the garage, have been addressed: the cat-slide roof has been replaced by one of symmetrical shape, and the 3 large openings replaced by 2. The revised proposed location also overcomes his concerns about the extension of the group and would be more practically located with respect to the stables. Taken overall, I am satisfied that the building would satisfy the criteria of DLP Policies G7 and EMV3.
12. In applying the policy of the NPPF concerning non-designated heritage assets, I take the view that any heritage interest retained in the cottage is not of any great significance; and that the scale of the harm both to the building and to its surroundings would also be fairly small. In my view, the Council has substantially overestimated both. Having taken a balanced approach, I believe the building would be acceptable; and I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.
13. The Council did not recommend conditions which in its view should be imposed in the event that the appeal is allowed. Subject to setting the usual time period for implementation and requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans, no further conditions are necessary.

Jonathan G King

Inspector