



The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 August 2018

by Mr Kim Bennett DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th August 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/V2255/D/18/3202785

Stone Stile Oast, Shottenden Lane, Selling ME13 9SD

- 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 Charles Bird against the decision of Swale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/500907/FULL, dated 15 February 2018, was refused by notice dated 5 April 2018.
 - The development proposed is a single storey garden room extension and internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal property comprises a former oast house, which the Council advises was converted to residential use pre 1974. It is located to the south of Shottenden Lane and set down below the level of that road in a substantial plot which is partly screened by tall hedges. Within the residential curtilage is a detached two storey building which appears ancillary to the oast house use. The surrounding land to the east, west and south is in use for fruit production and the site forms part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
4. The appellant argues that the proposal would be modest in size and would be clearly subservient to the main dwelling. It would not be prominent in the wider landscape setting and the design would be a modern interpretation which would not confuse the design of the original building or its plan form.
5. Although the past conversion has resulted in some insensitive window openings, importantly the traditional agricultural character of a Kentish oast house has been maintained with its typical rectangular plan form and the distinctive angular and circular kilns, complete with roof cowls. The Council regards it as a late example of a Kentish oast house and constitutes an undesignated heritage asset. I see no reason to disagree with that assessment.

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6. The proposed extension would be modest in size relative to the overall size of the property, but I agree with the Council that the proposed footprint beyond the original rectangular plan form and directly adjoining the rounded kiln would undermine the integrity and character of the original building, notwithstanding the proposed use of matching materials. The proposed use of extensive glazing and particularly the unfortunate connection between the glazed lantern and the rounded roof of the kiln, would compound that issue, introducing a domestic and non-agricultural appearance to the building. A combination of both issues would in my view harm the character of the undesignated heritage asset and further dilute the former traditional agricultural form of the building. Although the building has been converted for many years, it still dominates the immediate landscape setting and is clearly perceived as a former agricultural building notwithstanding the domestic curtilage which has since been created.
7. I acknowledge that the extension would not be prominent in the landscape because of its relatively secluded position and at best there might be glimpsed views only from surrounding areas or from the road in winter months. In that respect therefore I do not consider there would be any harm to the wider landscape setting of the AONB. However in my view, that should not override the need to respect the character of the building itself with an appropriate design which relates to its heritage significance. The Government attaches great importance to design and in the revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) issued in July 2018, it is reiterated that, amongst other criteria, decisions should ensure developments are sympathetic to local character and history. For the reasons set out above, I do not consider that would be the case with the current proposal.
8. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings (SPG) where one of the objectives is to ensure the preservation of structures recognised as symbolic of rural life. The guidance goes on to advise that the policy would be undermined if conversion changes the character of the building for example to that of a suburban dwelling. Although the building in question has clearly already been converted, it seems to me the principle of that approach is still applicable for subsequent extensions.
9. I acknowledge that an earlier appeal decision was allowed for an apparently similar case. The full details of that example are not before me and I have reached my finding based on the site circumstances of this particular proposal. However, I also note that the decision was dated January 2001 which pre dated the Council's Policies set out in its Local Plan dated 2017, and also Government guidance on design set out in the Framework.
10. Pursuant to the above, there would be harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling. The proposal would therefore be in conflict with Policies CP4, CP8, DM14 and DM16 of the Council's Local Plan 2017, its SPG and policy within the Framework, in that it would not sustain or enhance the significance of a non heritage asset and would not reinforce or enhance local distinctiveness.
11. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

Kim Bennett INSPECTOR

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