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## Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 01/12/20

gan **J P Tudor, BA (Hons), Cyfreithiwr (ddim yn ymarfer)**

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 01/12/20

by **J P Tudor, BA (Hons), Solicitor (non-practising)**

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020

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**Appeal Ref: APP/E6840/D/20/3262219**

**Site address: Horseshoes Barn, Great Park Farm, Great Park Road, Llanvihangel Crucorney, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 8EH**

**The Welsh Ministers have transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.**

- 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 & Mrs F. G. Adams against the decision of Monmouthshire County Council.
  - The application Ref: DM/2020/00500 dated 9 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 August 2020.
  - The development proposed is link extension and driveway alterations.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area.

### Reasons

3. The appeal site lies amongst a small group of properties in a rural location surrounded by agricultural fields. It comprises a barn which has been converted to residential use and, on slightly higher ground, a separate sizeable former agricultural building, which now accommodates a workshop space, gym and utility room. Some of the other surrounding residential properties also appear to have been converted from former agricultural buildings.
4. It is proposed to extend the barn conversion with a link block connecting it to the large agricultural style building to the south. As that link unit would occupy the current space between the two existing buildings, it would block the vehicle access to the rear of the site. Therefore, it is also proposed to alter the driveway and create an opening within the west elevation of the agricultural style building, to form a covered vehicular access through that building to the rear of the property.

5. As the appeal site is outside any settlement identified in the Council's Local Development Plan 2011-2021 (LDP)<sup>1</sup>, it is considered to be in the open countryside, where development is strictly controlled in recognition of the need to protect the character and quality of the rural environment.
6. The existing stone barn conversion consists of a larger two storey element to the front, with its gable end facing the road, and a long single storey section to the rear. Subsequently, two single storey extensions have been added, one to the front<sup>2</sup> and the other to the side<sup>3</sup> of the main two storey element. Although those additions have altered the building's appearance, its rural agricultural barn lineage remains legible from its basic design, form and context.
7. Policy H4 of the LDP deals specifically with the 'Conversion/Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Residential Use' and sets out various criteria which should all be met for such development to be permitted. The policy indicates, amongst other things, that the criteria should be applied strictly and that they are also applicable to proposals to extend buildings that have already been converted.
8. Therefore, Policy H4 is relevant to the appeal proposal. Criteria a) indicates that the form, bulk and general design of the proposal, including any extensions should respect the rural character and design of the building, while criteria f) says that only very modest extensions will be allowed.
9. As modest is not defined in Policy H4, the appellant maintains that Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)<sup>4</sup> concerning replacement dwellings and extensions to dwellings in the countryside can assist. However, the appellant also acknowledges that the SPG specifically states that it is not relevant to extensions to dwellings previously converted from barns. Therefore, I give it no weight in relation to this appeal, which concerns an extension to a converted barn.
10. Given the above, it is reasonable to consider the word modest in terms of its dictionary definition which, in this context, is 'relatively moderate, limited or small' or 'not large'.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, its appropriate application is a matter of planning judgement based on the particular proposal and circumstances.
11. The appellant considers that the proposed single storey link unit would be modest in size. However, it would be added to an existing kitchen extension, which already extends the original barn noticeably to the south. While the link structure may not be particularly large in itself, it would be read with the existing side extension. The cumulative effect, when considered with the existing side and front extensions, would not be very modest. Enlarging the building's footprint further in this piecemeal fashion would be unsympathetic and detrimental both to the character and design of the original barn and the existing building.
12. In physically connecting the dwelling to the substantial agricultural-style building to the south, itself about 20 metres wide, the proposed link block would create a long, single, continuous built form, branching out at an angle from the side of the already extended dwelling. The appellant suggests that public views would be limited but, notwithstanding intermittent screening from hedgerow as the land rises to the south,

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted 27 February 2014

<sup>2</sup> DC/2015/00858

<sup>3</sup> DC/2012/00213

<sup>4</sup> April 2015

<sup>5</sup> Oxford University Press: <https://www.lexico.com/>

the joined buildings would appear visually prominent and incongruous, particularly at the wide entrance which offers clear sight lines from the public highway.

13. The visual break offered by the space between the existing buildings would be lost, along with views towards the original side elevation of the barn. The extension would create a combined built form, consisting of a sprawling series of linked blocks of different shapes, sizes, heights and designs, that would appear awkward and unattractive in this rural setting and diminish the character of the original barn. The use of materials similar to those in the existing buildings would not sufficiently mitigate those adverse effects.
14. Other linked buildings to the north of the appeal site, said to have been formerly separate agricultural buildings, are referred to by the appellant. However, I have very limited details of those schemes or the circumstances that may have led to them being accepted, and so cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal, in relation to scale, effect or local development plan policy. In any event, the layout and relationship of those buildings appears different from the appeal site and all proposals have to be judged on their individual merits and in their particular context.
15. Although the appellant considers that the linking unit would provide a clearly identifiable front entrance and weather porch for the property, I am not convinced that a structure to the side of the main dwelling, shoehorned between it and the agricultural shed-like building, would successfully perform that function in visual terms. Furthermore, there may be other ways in which that issue could be addressed, without causing the harm associated with this scheme.
16. It is submitted by the appellant that, as the Council has not found that the proposal would adversely affect residential amenity, which normally concerns the living conditions of nearby occupiers, it is in some way inconsistent for it to have found harm in terms of visual impact. However, I see no necessary or inevitable relationship between those types of harm which, as the appellant appears to accept, are different concepts.
17. The appellant also submits that LDP Policy H6 is relevant to the appeal but the explanation of that alleged relevance is limited. Although Policy H6 relates to extensions to rural dwellings, Policy H4 is specifically concerned with conversions and proposals to extend converted buildings. Moreover, Policies H4 and DES1 form the basis of the Council's reasons for refusal and I consider them to be the LDP policies most directly relevant to this appeal.
18. Overall, therefore, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area. It follows that it would fail to comply with Policy DES1 of the LDP which seeks to ensure that development is of high quality sustainable design and respects the local character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire's built, historic and natural environment. The proposal would also be contrary to Policy H4 of the LDP, which similarly aims to protect the open countryside, with the most directly relevant criteria already detailed above.
19. Although the Council does not appear to object to the driveway alterations and I take a similar view, there would be no merit in allowing those aspects in a split decision.

## **Conclusion**

20. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the lack of objection from the Community Council, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.
21. In reaching my decision, I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act'). I consider that this decision is in accord with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Minister's well-being objectives as required by section 8 of the Act.

*JP Tudor*

INSPECTOR