
Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 01/08/17

gan Joanne Burston BSc MA MRTPI

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 21.08.2017

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 01/08/17

by Joanne Burston BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 21.08.2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E6840/A/17/3175726

Site address: The Stables, Land off Treherbert Road, Croesyceiliog Cwmbran

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 A Thomas against the decision of Monmouthshire County Council.
 - The application Ref DC/2016/00593, dated 14 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of stables to holiday let.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. 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. I consider that this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objective of supporting safe, cohesive and resilient communities.

Main Issues

3. The main issue in this appeal is whether the proposed development accords with development plan policies on tourist accommodation in the countryside and the conversion of rural buildings, with particular regard to the effect of the proposed development on the character of the rural landscape.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is in the countryside well beyond the boundaries of any built-up area. The stables which are proposed for conversion to holiday accommodation is a building of modern construction and appearance. It forms part of a small complex of buildings that also include what appear to be further stables and a storage building.
 5. It is served off a private access drive from Treherbert Road, some 6km outside Cwmbran town centre. Its setting is characterised predominantly by fields in agricultural use, a verdant landscape and sporadic built form.
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6. Monmouthshire Local Development Plan 2014 (LDP) Policies T2 and H4 have been brought to my attention. It is clear that the Council has a permissive approach to the conversion of farm buildings in the countryside to provide small-scale visitor accommodation. This proposal is for the conversion of a farm building and small scale visitor accommodation would be provided. However, there are some relevant qualifications to the Policies. First, that the conversion of buildings of a modern construction and materials will be permitted where the building is not of an incongruous appearance, and that the building has been used for its intended purpose for a significant period of time. Furthermore, LDP Policy LC5 states, amongst other matters, that development will be permitted provided that it would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the special character or quality of Monmouthshire's landscape, in particular by introducing or intensifying a use which is incompatible with its location.
7. I acknowledge that efforts have been made to work with the existing characteristics of the site. In this respect, although glimpsed local views would be possible, the surrounding natural screening and modest size of the building would ensure that the proposal would not be readily visible in the wider landscape. Nevertheless, even though I do not envisage that the proposal would have a significant visual impact within the wider area, it would, nonetheless have a significant effect on landscape character. At present, the existing site is low key and has very little impact in this regard displaying a very unassuming and tranquil character.
8. Against this context, the appeal proposal would introduce changes to the built form, giving the building a more domestic appearance, alongside the associated general activity, lighting, noise and the movement and parking of vehicles at a level commensurate with the holiday unit. Whilst I agree that the requirement for domestic paraphernalia would not be to the same extent as that for a permanent dwelling house, it is likely that personal property would be kept on site for the duration of the occupancy as well as the unit being equipped with outdoor furniture, refuse facilities etc. Moreover, in terms of appearance, having regard to its domestic scale and arrangement of windows and doors, it would be more akin to a suburban bungalow, thus incongruous in this countryside setting.
9. I acknowledge the letters provided by the appellant regarding the use of the stables. However on the basis of the evidence before me I am unable to establish if the stables have been used for their intended purpose for a significant period of time as required by LDP Policies H4 and T2.
10. I have been referred to several other developments locally, said to be made in similar circumstances. However I do not have the full details of the circumstances that led to these proposals being accepted and so cannot be sure they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal. In any case I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
11. The appeal proposal would therefore significantly intensify the use of the site and escalate its current almost neutral effect to being harmful to the rural landscape character, contrary to LDP Policies T2, H4 and LC5.

Conclusion

12. In conclusion, I find no other considerations of sufficient weight to overcome the significant and harmful impact of the development. I therefore determine that the appeal should be dismissed.

Joanne Burston INSPECTOR