
Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 12/11/15

**gan Melissa Hall BA(Hons) BTP MSc
MRTPI**

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 30/11/2015

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12/11/15

**by Melissa Hall BA(Hons) BTP MSc
MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 30/11/2015

Appeal Ref: APP/E6840/A/15/3130477

**Site address: Greenmeadow, Llanellen, Nr Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7
9HG**

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 Malcom Francis against the decision of Monmouthshire County Council.
 - The application Ref DC/2014/01038, dated 19 August 2014, was refused by notice dated 31 March 2015.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of a disused dairy / barn into a self contained dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed conversion upon policies imposing a strict control over development in the countryside in order to protect the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal building is located some 30 metres north of an existing bungalow known as Greenmeadow. It is separated from this dwelling by a tall hedge but shares the vehicular access from the highway. There are fields to the north, east and west of the site.
4. Although the surrounding area has a predominantly rural character, the site is grouped with several other buildings associated with Greenmeadow. The appeal building is one of several buildings (which includes existing dwellings) scattered outside, but in close proximity to, the dense built form in the settlement of Llanellen.
5. I understand that the former dairy / barn for which the conversion to residential use is sought was constructed in the 1960's. It is part two storey with a dual pitched roof and part single storey with a mono pitched roof. The building is of rectangular form,

and of steel frame construction with rendered block infill and a corrugated asbestos cement sheet roof.

6. For the purposes of the adopted Monmouthshire Local Development Plan 2014 (LDP), the appeal site is defined as being within the open countryside where changes of use of buildings to residential use are subject to strict control. This reflects the national planning policy approach set out at paragraph 4.7.8 of Planning Policy Wales, Edition 7 July 2014 (PPW).
7. Although LDP Policy H4 allows for the conversion or rehabilitation of buildings in the open countryside for residential use, criterion (e) states that buildings of modern construction and materials such as concrete block work will not be considered favourable for residential conversions.
8. The appellant states that there is no clear definition in the LDP of what constitutes 'modern'; rather, this term covers a wide range of styles and functions of a building. He contends that the building is from the early steel framed period and so, in that sense, is not 'modern' as its construction does not allow for what would now be considered modern agricultural techniques and requirements for mechanisation. This can be seen from its small scale, restricted height and pedestrian door openings.
9. The Council has provided me with a copy of its Supplementary Planning Guidance '*Conversion of Agricultural Buildings Design Guide*' April 2015 (SPG). From my reading of the SPG, it is clear that it is intended to relate primarily to the overarching aim of retaining and preserving traditional agricultural and rural buildings, thereby safeguarding the character and appearance of the countryside. It is helpful insofar as it describes the characteristics of historic farm buildings as *inter alia* generally made of stone, brick or timber-framing and normally having a slate, stone or pantile roof.
10. As the appeal building has been constructed using a steel frame, concrete block work and corrugated sheets, and dates circa 1960s, I am of the opinion that it represents a building of modern construction and materials. Whilst I accept that these materials have generally been used for a period in excess of 50 years, there is no substantive evidence that the characteristics of this particular building are such that it is of particular individual merit, has intrinsic architectural value, or that it is constructed of traditional materials that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the rural area. Neither is there compelling evidence that it acts as a clear visual reminder of the history or connections with the area or that it is a vernacular building.
11. On the evidence before me, therefore, the building cannot properly be considered a traditional agricultural or rural building for which a re-use for residential purposes in order to protect its historic or architectural merit would be desirable. In this context, the proposal would be contrary to criterion (e) of LDP Policy H4 and the thrust of the SPG.
12. My attention has been drawn to Paragraph 3.2.3 of Technical Advice Note 6 '*Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities*' which requires conversions to respect the landscape and local building styles and materials. I do not dispute that the Council does not take issue with the appearance and visual impact of the proposal.
13. I have also been provided with a copy of a letter from a firm of chartered surveyors, confirming that the appeal building is not suitable for business use and that there is sufficient availability of commercial properties within a 10 mile radius of Llanellen.

14. Whilst I do not disagree that the proposal may comply with other criterion in Policy H4, these matters would not outweigh the conflict with criterion (e) that I have described.
15. I also note that, although the appeal building is in the open countryside for the purposes of the LDP, it is not situated in an isolated location but in close proximity to the settlement of Llanellen. Nevertheless, I am not persuaded that allowing incremental changes to modern rural buildings resulting in a more widespread distribution of residential development in the countryside outside existing settlements would safeguard its character. To this end, it would conflict with the aims of paragraph 9.3.3 of PPW which states that the cumulative effects of development or redevelopment should not be allowed to damage an area's character.

Other Matters

16. The appellant has drawn my attention to what he considers to be two similar forms of steel framed structures for which planning permission has been granted for conversion under planning application Refs DC/2006/00009 and DC/2008/00082. Other than the planning application numbers, I have been provided with details pertaining to application Ref DC/2006/00009 only.
17. Nevertheless, the details provided in respect of this application are limited to an extract from a structural appraisal report dating the steel framed building to 1902 together with a photograph of the building. I acknowledge that the appellant disputes the presence of such a building from this period given that it is not shown on any map of that location. However, as I do not have the full facts of that case before me, I cannot comment on whether the information submitted with the application accurately dated the building and provided compelling evidence that it was not a 'modern' structure or the exact circumstances in which planning permission was granted by the Council. Be that as it may, each proposal must be determined on its own merits, which is what I have done.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons outlined above, and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Melissa Hall

INSPECTOR