



Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 24/11/20

gan Paul Selby, BEng (Hons) MSc
MRTPI

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 9th December 2020

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24/11/20

by Paul Selby, BEng (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 9th December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/E6840/D/20/3261603

Site address: Rear Barn, Manor Farm, St. Bride's Road, St. Bride's Netherwent, Caldicot, NP26 3AT

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 Jon Moore against the decision of Monmouthshire County Council.
 - The application Ref: DM/2020/00537 dated 17 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is two-storey domestic extension to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. There are some discrepancies between the dimensions of windows shown on the proposed elevations (ref: 1495:SK:10:04) and those included on the floor plans (ref: 1495:SK:10:02). For the avoidance of doubt, and having regard to the Council's reason for refusal, I have determined the appeal principally with reference to the proposed elevations (ref: 1495:SK:10:04).

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the area's character and appearance.

Reasons

4. The appeal site forms part of the rural hamlet of St. Bride's Netherwent, which is set within an attractive valley landscape of wooded ridges and open farmland. The site lies outside any settlement designated by the Monmouthshire Local Development Plan (LDP). For the purposes of the LDP, therefore, it lies within the open countryside.
 5. St. Bride's Netherwent has a somewhat dispersed character, albeit with some clustering of built form, with dwellings typically lining the rural lane which runs north/south. Some of these dwellings are purpose-built as such, whereas others are converted from original agricultural buildings, as is the case with the appeal building. As an ensemble, the built form of the hamlet exhibits an intrinsically rural character and treads lightly on the landscape of which it forms part of.
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6. I am informed that Rear Barn has been subject to two extensions, including when it was originally converted to a dwelling in 2006. This evolution of its built form was evident on my site visit, but it retains the appearance of a modest, stone-built building typical of a rural farmstead, and contrasts with the more ornamented architecture of the purpose-built dwellings to the north and south. This juxtaposition of traditional architecture reinforces the hamlet's rural character.
7. LDP policy H4 is entitled 'Conversion / Rehabilitation of Buildings in the Open Countryside for Residential Use' and sets out criteria for assessing relevant proposals. The policy states that these criteria will be applied to proposals to extend buildings that have already been converted. Amongst other things, criteria (a) and (f) state that conversions of buildings in the open countryside for residential use will be permitted where extensions "respect the rural character and design of the building" and that "only very modest extensions will be allowed". The Council's 'Rural Conversions to a Residential or Tourism Use' Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) provides further guidance in respect of this policy's application.
8. The Council estimates that, accounting for the removal of the existing single storey extension, the proposal would represent a volumetric increase of around 65%; or in comparison to the original barn, around 80%. These spatial calculations are not contended by the appellant. Visually, the scale of the proposal would appear significantly greater than the extension it would replace, and it would be considerably more prominent, set back only around 1m from the barn's west elevation. With a height matching that of the existing building and a width only marginally narrower, it would not read as a subsidiary or 'very modest' extension of the building.
9. The proposed extension would largely mimic the rural vernacular of the barn in its mass, materials and the dimensions of its publicly visible windows and doors. The extension would also not expand the built envelope of the hamlet and would not be disproportionate to the size of the site. Nonetheless, the double roof design and the extension's considerable length would fundamentally alter the simple, linear form of the original building, which remains perceptible in views from the lane. Viewed as a whole, the extended building would have a markedly domestic scale and appearance. This would unacceptably erode the intrinsic rural character of the existing building, harming the character and appearance of the hamlet and the wider rural landscape of which it forms part.
10. For the above reasons I conclude that the proposal would not accord with criteria (a) and (f) of LDP policy H4. It would also conflict with LDP policy DES1, which amongst other things requires proposals to respect the existing form, scale, siting, massing, materials and layout of its setting and any neighbouring quality buildings; and would run counter to the aims of the Council's SPG.

Other Matters and Conclusion

11. My attention has been drawn to a planning permission granted by the Council for a domestic extension which represented a 70% volumetric increase. Whilst the full details of that case are not before me, I note that the officer in that case considered that there would be no harmful intrusive impact on the landscape. For the stated reasons I do not find that to be the case here. I have proceeded to determine the proposal based on the individual circumstances of the case.
12. I note that the appellant seeks to extend his property to provide additional accommodation for his family and, during the application process, amended the design following feedback from the Council. The proposal has attracted support from

Caerwent Community Council, local residents and members of the Council's Planning Committee, which I recognise. I also note that the Council does not allege detrimental impacts on residential amenity, biodiversity and highway safety; and I have no reason to find otherwise. Nonetheless, these matters do not outweigh the identified harm. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

13. In reaching my decision, I have taken account of 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 building healthier communities and better environments.

Paul Selby

INSPECTOR