
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: 06/01/2016

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: 06/01/2016

Appeal Ref: APP/E6840/A/15/3081138

**Site address: Steel Barn, Cwmdowlais Farm, Llanbadoc, Usk, Monmouthshire
NP15 1TP**

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 L Jones against the decision of Monmouthshire County Council.
 - The application Ref DC/2015/00190, dated 13 February 2015, was refused by notice dated 8 April 2015.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of existing Dutch barn into holiday let units, garage and gym.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The Dutch barn is a substantial, largely open sided, metal clad structure, which is grouped with four former agricultural stone barns which have been converted to residential use. It has a part metal, part timber frame. In my opinion, its condition could be described as fair.
 4. It is served off a long, private access drive from Usk Road, some 2 miles outside Usk town centre. Its setting is characterised predominantly by fields in agricultural use, a verdant landscape and sporadic built form.
 5. The Council has considered the proposal against Policy T2 of the adopted Monmouthshire Local Development Plan 2014 (LDP), which relates to visitor accommodation outside settlements. It states that the provision of permanent serviced or self-catering visitor accommodation will only be permitted if it consists of the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings and the conversion of buildings for such uses complies with the criteria set out in LDP Policy H4.
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6. Amongst other things, Criterion e) of Policy H4 states that buildings of modern construction and materials such as concrete block work, portal frame buildings clad in metal sheeting or buildings of substandard quality will not be considered favourably for conversion.
7. However, LDP Policy T2 also lists exceptions in relation to the provision of visitor accommodation where they involve *inter alia* the conversion of buildings of modern construction and materials provided the buildings are appropriate for residential use, not of substandard quality and / or incongruous appearance and have been used for their intended purpose for a significant period of time.
8. I note the appellant's contention that the original barn (not including the lean-to additions) is not of modern construction. To this end, he states that corrugated iron dates from 1829 and the plaque on the barn details the supplier, Crump Alvin Works Gloucester, which ceased trading in 1916. I have also been provided with an extract from an OS Plan, on which the appellant has annotated 'Revision of 1918 with additions in 1949'. This appears to show a building in the same position as that the subject of the appeal, albeit of a narrower, rectangular footprint.
9. Whilst part of the building may not therefore be of modern construction, the appellant confirms that the lean-to elements were added in the 1970's. In my view, these elements account for a large proportion of the overall building and cannot be discounted in assessing whether the building represents the conversion of a building of modern construction.
10. I accept that the building is not a contemporary agricultural or factory building. However, I do not agree with the appellant that, on the basis of the interpretation of the wording of Criterion b) of Policy T2, 'modern' is limited solely to buildings less than 10 years old. Thus, the barn is not exempt from requiring scrutiny.
11. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance '*Conversion of Agricultural Buildings Design Guide*' April 2015 (SPG) is helpful in this regard. In my view, 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 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.
12. In this context, and whilst the original barn may date from the early 1900's, the subsequent 1970's additions of steel frame construction, corrugated sheet roof covering and partial concrete block infill, represents a substantial element of modern construction and materials. To this end, it conflicts with the requirements of Criterion e) of LDP Policy H4.
13. Be that as it may, I have had regard to the exception provided in Policy T2 for buildings of modern construction, insofar as whether the barn is appropriate for residential use as holiday lets, not of substandard quality and / or incongruous appearance.
14. I am of the opinion that consideration of the extent of the works required to facilitate the proposal is necessary in order to assess whether the building is appropriate for residential use. I am not convinced by what I saw at my site visit that the existing structural framework is substantial enough to be capable of conversion to holiday lets, a garage and a gym without major reconstruction and alteration. I have not been provided with a structural survey that confirms otherwise.

15. I note that the appellant refers to the barn lending itself readily to conversion with no extensive works required and that it is to principally remain in the same form. Reference is made to existing window openings being used; however, the majority of the barn is open sided with elements finished in corrugated sheet with no openings. The corrugated sheeting to the end elevation would be removed as part of the proposal. The lean-to elements would be replaced and reduced in footprint, pitch and height. There is no evidence before me detailing the extent of the external envelope that would be retained. Thus, from my understanding of the submitted drawings, it is primarily the main roof and what remains of its supporting structure that is to be retained.
16. The proposal would involve the construction of a new timber frame within the existing footprint, set back to allow the existing structure to remain exposed. The walls would be clad using a composite panel and the metal corrugated sheeting to the lean-to would be replaced with new to match the existing.
17. In this context, the works required to facilitate the conversion are extensive. That is, a roof and a wall made of corrugated steel sheet, together with a steel frame, do not constitute a substantial form of construction requiring only minor intervention to accommodate the residential use.
18. Hence, for the reasons I have described, the proposal would have a significant and unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the building and its surroundings, and would conflict with LDP Policies H4 and T2 and with the SPG.
19. Turning to the matter of whether the proposal would have a dominating effect on the existing converted barns. Although substantially open to three sides, the large and imposing scale of the Dutch barn can be readily appreciated. The relationship with the existing converted barns, which are in residential use, would not change as a result of the proposal.
20. In this context, I do not consider that the proposed conversion of the Dutch barn, or the physical works required to facilitate such a conversion, would have any greater impact on the relationship with the existing dwellings. Thus I do not find that it would have a dominating effect on the group. Whilst I do not find conflict with LDP Policies EP1 or DES1 in this regard, it does not overcome the harm that I have otherwise identified.
21. My attention has been drawn to LDP Policy RE3 which relates to agricultural diversification. There is no compelling evidence before me that the proposal is required to make a positive contribution to an existing agricultural enterprise and its diversification.
22. In respect of LDP Policy RE6, which relates to the provision of recreation, tourism and leisure facilities in the open countryside, I do not find that it adds anything more to the policies already considered relevant to matters at issue in this appeal.
23. The appellant contends that the proposal would be environmentally and financially sound. My attention has also been drawn to Technical Advice Note 6 '*Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities*' which advises that conversions for holiday use can contribute to the rural economy and may reduce pressure to use other houses in the area for holiday use. Although I do not dispute that there may be benefits associated with the proposal, these do not outweigh the harm in the balance of acceptability.

Conclusion

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

Melissa Hall

INSPECTOR