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Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 December 2006

by **Stephen Brown** MA DipArch(Cantab) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government

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Date: 31 January 2007

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/A/06/2017790/WF Camwell Orchard, Much Hadham SG10 6BB

- 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 by Mr & Mrs R Munday against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
- The application ref. 3/05/2040/FP, dated 19 October 2005, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2005.
- The development proposed is the construction of an extension.

Summary of Decision: The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

1. The appeal site is adjacent to Camwell Hall Farm House, a Grade II* listed building. I have therefore paid special regard to the desirability of preserving its setting as required by Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main issue

2. From my inspection of the appeal site and its surroundings, and from the written representations made I consider the main issue in this case to be the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the appeal site and the area in its vicinity, and on the setting of the adjacent listed building.

Planning policy background

3. Development plan policy before me is from the East Hertfordshire Local Plan of 1999. Policy RA3 seeks to prevent inappropriate development in rural areas beyond the Green Belt, however limited extensions to existing dwellings may be permitted, provided they accord with the aims of Policy BE6. The appeal site lies within a designated landscape conservation area where Policy RA11 seeks to ensure that special consideration is given to the landscape implications of proposed development, and that visually harmful development should not be granted planning permission. Policy BE2 seeks to ensure that all development meets a high standard of design and layout in accordance with its adopted guidelines for residential development. Policy BE6 seeks to ensure that extensions to existing dwellings in rural areas should be of a scale, size, siting and design that would not harm the appearance of the area. Policy BE16 seeks to ensure amongst other things that particular consideration should be given to the conservation and enhancement of the settings of listed buildings.

4. Policy from the East Herts Local Plan Second Review Re-deposit Version of 2004 is also before me. Policies GBC5, GBC6, GBC16b, ENV11 & BH15 reflect adopted Local Plan policies concerning rural areas beyond the Green Belt, landscape conservation areas, extensions to dwellings and protection of listed building interests. This is not an adopted plan, but I shall treat it as a material consideration in determination of this appeal.

Reasons

5. The existing house with its pitched roof coming down to a low eaves level over the front verandah is of a relatively small scale and simple form. It was originally built on the basis that it was needed in connection with agricultural work. It has the character of a small agricultural or stables building, and fits unobtrusively within the relatively flat and open surrounding landscape. I understand one of the original design intentions was to keep the overall height as low as possible in order to minimise the impact.
6. The proposal is to build a new wing on the western end of the house providing a living room and study on the ground floor, with a bedroom and dressing room above. This would be a full two-storeys, with a pitched roof at right angles to the existing roof. The footprint – at about 8.75 x 5.8 metres - would be comparable with that of the main body of the existing house, which is about 9.2 x 6.0 metres, excluding the verandah and the lean-to at the eastern end. Although I note there is disagreement about the proportional increase in floor area, it appears to me that this would be a very substantial addition to the house.
7. To my mind the extension would contrast in scale with the existing building, in which the upper storey is partly contained within the attic space. The increased height and the gables to both ends of the new wing would result in a bulky appearance that would dominate the appearance of the original dwelling. The simple form of the building would be changed to an extent that it would lose its agricultural/stable-like character, and it would become conspicuous and incongruous within the surrounding agricultural landscape.
8. It is argued that the sloping attic ceilings prevent rooms from being furnished properly, and that this necessitates a full two-storey extension. However, the sloping ceilings are principally on one side of the house, and although the usable room area is somewhat reduced the existing first floor bedrooms remain of practical dimensions.
9. The house stands about 70 metres away from the listed farmhouse and about 100 metres from the associated farm buildings. To my mind the house as extended would have a somewhat urban character and not be compatible with this extremely rural setting. The generally open nature of the surroundings and the few buildings in the vicinity mean that the appeal property is seen as part of a group with the other buildings. Although the belt of trees separating the appeal property from the farmhouse provides a degree of screening, this does not significantly reduce the impact the extended house would have upon the group as a whole. As it exists the appeal property appears relatively inconspicuous in relation to the very fine farmhouse. I consider the extended house would be a somewhat assertive introduction, and an incongruous element in the setting of the listed building.
10. I conclude on the main issue that the proposals would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the appeal site and the area in its vicinity, and to the setting of the adjacent listed building. The proposals would not accord with the aims of Local Plan Policies RA3, RA11, BE2, BE6 & BE16.

Conclusions

11. I have considered all other matters before me, including the arguments that the extension is necessary to accommodate a growing family, and that other examples of out-of-scale developments have been allowed in the area that are more visually disturbing. However, I concur with the Council's view that some form of extension could be acceptable, but do not accept that it is necessary to build such a bulky extension, or in this form. Furthermore, I have considered this case on its particular merits, and the existence of other possibly harmful developments does not justify the harm that would be caused in this case. I find neither these nor any other matters sufficient to outweigh the considerations that have led me to my decision. For the reasons given above, I consider that the appeal should be dismissed.

Formal Decision

12. I dismiss the appeal.

Stephen Brown

Stephen Brown
Inspector

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