



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 29 October 2020

by R Morgan BSc (Hons), MCD, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/20/3255967

Owlbrook, Bridge, Crickheath, Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 8BT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Miss Pat Ellis against Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00760/FUL, is dated 19 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of 21 windows and three doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission for the replacement of 21 windows and three doors is refused.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development was changed following the submission of the application to include reference to the replacement of doors as well as windows. I have used this more accurate description in assessing this appeal, instead of the shorter description shown on the application form.

Main Issue

3. Although it did not determine the application within the required period, the Council has indicated the grounds on which it would have refused the application, had it had the opportunity to make a decision. The Council's statement explains its concerns, which relate to the effect of the proposed replacement windows and doors on the host building, which has been identified to be a non-designated heritage.
4. The main issue is therefore the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the host building as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

5. The appeal concerns a former agricultural building located in an area of open countryside. The converted barn once formed part of Waen Wen Farm, which now appears to be in commercial use. Despite this change, the traditional stone farm barns around the former farmyard are still present alongside more modern buildings, and the agricultural origins of the Waen Wen site are still clearly apparent. Owlbrook is viewed in the context of these former farm

buildings, which it lies immediately adjacent to, and the wider rural landscape which they form part of.

6. Although converted to residential use, Owlbrook retains the character of an agricultural building which has been altered and added to over time. The main, older part of the appeal building is of significant height, the lower sections of which are constructed of local yellow stone. Above this, the building is faced with reddish coloured bricks, with later additions clearly visible, and a steeply pitched slate roof. The end gables and parts of the main elevations have exposed timbers, and within parts of the timber frame the brickwork has been laid in a decorative herringbone pattern. A more recent, single storey addition to the rear of the building is constructed of stone with brick detailing around the windows, to match that found on the main part of the building.
7. The Council has identified Owlbrook as a non-designated heritage asset owing to its age, construction and association with Waen Wen Farm. The variety of materials, colours, patterns and textures visible on the external elevations contribute significantly to the attractive appearance of the building, its interest and character.
8. The existing brown painted timber windows and doors were added when the building was converted to a dwelling in around 2004, and have since deteriorated. I note the appellant's comments that they are not thermally efficient. The proposal would replace the windows with cream coloured, low profile uPVC units, which are designed to look like traditional wooden windows and would provide a significant improvement in terms of thermal insulation, compared with the current situation.
9. However, the uniform appearance and even texture of the proposed windows would fail to respect the historic character of the host building, which is strongly derived from the variation in colour and texture of its external materials. Furthermore, a number of the windows are set within the exposed timber frame. The juxtaposition of the modern materials against the old timbers would accentuate the difference between the consistent and regular appearance of the proposed windows, and the organic, fine grained appearance of the existing materials. As a result, the proposal would cause harm to the character of the building.
10. A composite door is proposed to replace the front door, although it is not entirely clear from the information provided which door unit would be used, or how the side panels would be treated. The choice of a composite material for the front door would have the same shortcomings as that of the proposed windows. In the absence of any further information, I have assumed that the other doors, which include a patio style door at one end of the building, and a door at first floor level with a Juliet style balcony, are proposed to be replaced with the same style of windows as in the rest of the building.
11. The appellant has proposed a cream colour for the windows and doors. The colour would be entirely consistent, so would not reflect the character of the host building, whose existing materials incorporate a wide palette of shades. In addition, such a pale colour would look much brighter than the existing external materials, drawing attention to the replacement windows and doors, and accentuating the harm to the appearance of the host building within its wider historic agricultural setting.

12. I note the appellant's comments that uPVC or aluminium windows have been permitted for use in other historic agricultural buildings locally. However, I have not been provided with full details of these cases, and have assessed this proposal on its own merits, having regard to the particular circumstances of the case.
13. I conclude that the proposed windows and doors would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the host building as a non-designated heritage asset. The proposal would conflict with Policy CS6 of the Shropshire Core Strategy 2011, which amongst other considerations requires that development protects, restores, conserves and enhances the built and historic environment. There is further conflict with Policy MD2 of the Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan 2015 (SAMDev), concerning the need for development to contribute to and respect locally characteristic architectural design and details, such as building materials, form, colour and texture of detailing, and to protect, conserve and enhance the historic context and character of heritage assets.
14. The proposal also conflicts with criteria 1 and 2 of SAMDev Policy MD13, which protect against harm or loss of significance to non-designated heritage assets. Criteria 3 of Policy MD13 goes beyond the requirements of paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which calls for a balanced judgement of any harm against the significance of the heritage asset. I have therefore used the wording of the national guidance, which the proposal fails to comply with.
15. The Council has referred to additional policies in its statement, but I consider those referred to above to be the most relevant to the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

16. Material considerations do not indicate that I should conclude other than in accordance with the development plan as a whole. I therefore conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR