



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2014

by **M Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

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

Decision date: 28 August 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/N1350/A/14/2218775

Denton Hall Farm, Denton, Darlington, DL2 3TY

- 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 Lord Barnard (Raby Estates) against the decision of Darlington Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 13/00788/FUL, dated 7 October 2013, was refused by notice dated 17 December 2013.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of a traditional single storey two room barn constructed of natural stone walls with red pantile roof coverings.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The content of the recently published national Planning Practice Guidance has been considered, but in light of the facts in this case the national Planning Practice Guidance does not alter my conclusions.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the demolition of the single storey barn would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Denton Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The single storey stone barn is situated adjacent to Cocker Beck and a public footpath, and occupies a position within the Denton Conservation Area. The Denton Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2008 (the Character Appraisal) identifies the village's character as being defined by the large group of buildings constituting Denton Hall Farm, which provide a visual focal point and a strong character worthy of conservation. The barn, whilst not listed, is specifically identified as a building of local historic interest and as a result of its general condition, was identified in the Character Appraisal as one of three 'areas worthy of improvement'. Furthermore, the document indicates its encouragement for the sensitive restoration and retention of the building, which adds significantly to the historic character and interest of the village.
5. The appellant has indicated in the grounds of appeal that the building is redundant, in a poor condition, and is beyond economic repair. Furthermore, the submitted heritage statement prepared on behalf of the appellant cites the

overall heritage value of the building as being low as a result of the alterations and changes which have been carried out to the building over time. However, whilst I noted that the building requires a certain degree of restoration, it occupies a prominent position within the conservation area and, as highlighted in the appellant's heritage statement, is of aesthetic value in the contribution it makes to the appearance of the village.

6. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) emphasises that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, with the level of weight to be guided by the importance of the asset. Despite the barn's condition and need for restoration, its importance is specifically recognised in the Character Appraisal, and the traditional form and whitewashed appearance of the barn coupled with the prominence of its location results in an overall positive contribution to the appearance of the village. Beyond the appellant's statements regarding the redundancy and usefulness of the building, no detailed or compelling evidence has been provided regarding structural instability, or a lack of viability in restoring the building, and as such it has not therefore been demonstrated that the barn would be capable of practical repair. On this basis it has not been established that the demolition of the building is justified on the grounds that it is not capable of retention.
7. The appellant has cited a lack of possible alternative uses of the barn due to its position adjacent to Cocker Beck and within Flood Zone 3, as additional weight in support of the demolition of the building. However, in this respect I agree with the conclusion reached by the Council that the location of the building within Flood Zone 3 does not necessarily preclude its future occupation for a variety of other uses. The evidence submitted in support of the appeal provides no indication that a Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out or that any detailed assessment of alternative uses of the building has been undertaken. I have therefore not attached any significant weight to this matter in reaching my conclusions on the main issue.
8. I conclude that the demolition of the single storey barn would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Denton Conservation Area. The proposal would conflict with the requirements of Policy CS14 of the Darlington Core Strategy 2011, which seeks to protect, enhance and promote buildings and their settings in conservation areas. The harm identified would amount to "less than substantial harm" which the Framework advises must be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme. In this respect, no public benefits resulting from the demolition of the barn have been cited which would outweigh the harm that the loss of the building would cause to the Denton Conservation Area. I therefore conclude the proposal would also fail to comply with national policy as outlined in the Framework.

Other Matters

9. I have taken into account that the Council has not raised any objections on ecological grounds further to the submission of a Bat and Barn Owl Risk Assessment Survey Report with the planning application. However, whilst this would weigh in support of the proposed demolition of the barn, this would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm identified to the conservation area in the main issue.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

M Seaton

INSPECTOR

