
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 August 2011

by **Mrs K.A. Ellison BA, MPhil, MRTPI**

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

Decision date: **31 August 2011**

Appeal Ref: APP/H0738/A/11/2153203

High Middlefield Farm, Durham Road, Stockton on Tees TS21 3LS

- 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 J Duell against the decision of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 10/0136/FUL dated 13 January 2010 was refused by notice dated 13 April 2011.
 - The development proposed is a first storey extension to parents' wing.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The Council objected to the proposal partly on the basis that it would create an independent residential dwelling. However, the description of development clearly refers to an extension and I have determined the appeal on that basis. The main issue in the appeal therefore, is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing farmhouse and the surrounding countryside.

Reasons

3. High Middlefield Farm lies close to the urban area but is located outside the limits to development. I noted during my site visit that various of the outbuildings are in the process of conversion and that the surrounding area includes electricity pylons and a Bed and Breakfast business. In spite of the changes which have taken place however, the setting of the farmhouse and its associated buildings continues to be essentially open and rural in character.
4. The house dates from the nineteenth century and is a substantial, two storey dwelling of simple appearance and form. The main elevation faces southwards, with only limited public views of the house being available, mainly from the A177 some way to the east. The parents' wing is in the form of a single storey offshoot attached to the rear of the house. Presently, it provides a main living area, a bedroom and a further, smaller room currently also in use as a bedroom. The appeal proposal concerns the provision of an upper floor to this wing which would allow the creation of two en suite bedrooms at first floor level as well as more generous living arrangements to the ground floor.

5. The extension would run out at right angles from the rear of the house and, based on the Council's figures, would measure some 12m in length. Its ridge would be set some 1.8m lower than the ridge of the main house for part of its length, with a further step down for the remainder, which would include a window set in the eaves. Whilst this might serve to break up the elevation to a certain degree, the extension would nevertheless appear as a substantial addition to the existing house. Despite its position in relation to the adjacent barn, the extension would amount to a significant intrusion into the surrounding, open countryside. Also, as the Council points out, the historic character of the house is for any offshoots to be substantially lower than the main house. Whilst the extension may be comparable to the height of some of the outbuildings, its effect would be more intrusive due to its physical attachment to the house. In addition, with its more complex roof and eaves arrangement, the extension would fail to reflect the simplicity which characterises the design of the main house. In these respects therefore, the proposal would be contrary to Local Plan policy HO12, which requires that extensions should be in keeping with the property and the streetscene.
6. The parents' wing is presently occupied by Miss Duell, who runs the horse livery. In support of the proposal, it is pointed out that the extension is needed to provide a level of accommodation more suited to her own family circumstances. At the time of my site visit, I was able to observe that the existing accommodation arrangements are, indeed, somewhat cramped and I acknowledge the difficulties of her situation. It is also said that the agricultural activities would not be viable without the equestrian centre. However, without further evidence as to the importance of the equestrian business to the farm enterprise as a whole, as well as Ms Duell's role within it, these considerations are not sufficient to demonstrate that the proposal would satisfy the terms of policy EN13 which, among other things, permits development outside the limits to development where it is necessary for a farming operation.

Conclusion

7. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

K.A. Ellison

Inspector