

11. FULL APPLICATION - ERECTION OF SMALL STORE, HORSESHOE COTTAGE, BACK LANE, ALSTONEFIELD (NP/SM/0716/0731 P2561, 413126 / 355395 1/8/2016/SC)

APPLICANT: MS MANDY TURLEY

Site and Surroundings

The application site contains a stone-built barn, previously referred to as the Blacksmith's Cottage or former Blacksmith's Workshop, which has recently had approval for conversion to an open market dwelling. The property is situated in a relatively isolated position adjacent to Back Lane approximately 200m to the south-west of the main group of residential properties in Alstonefield. The single-storey building is simple and robust in its form and detailing and is constructed from limestone and set within a small garden curtilage.

Proposal

Planning permission is being sought to erect a single storey detached outbuilding to accommodate battery storage space to power the array of solar panels on the roof slope of the cottage, a back-up generator and storage for maintenance equipment to power the water supply and sewage treatment plant in connection with the overall functioning of the cottage.

The outbuilding would be sited around 6.5m to the east of the cottage and close to the rear boundary wall of the garden. It would measure approximately 5m x 3m x 2.6m to the ridge. The main structure would be constructed of horizontal tongue and grooved timber under a grey roof (roofing materials not specified on plans). The plans also show a window and door in the east gable elevation and three windows on the south elevation. The agent has stated that the roof is pitched south in order to gain maximum sunlight on the south-facing slope should further solar thermal energy be required in the future.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reason:

- 1. By virtue of the outbuilding's size, siting and use of materials, it would fail to reflect the local building vernacular, and thereby detract from the valued characteristics of the traditional cottage and its setting. Moreover, the outbuilding would be seen from public vantage points, exacerbating the harmful impact on the cottage, its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape impact, therefore failing to conserve the character of the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Park more widely. As such, the development is contrary to policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Core Strategy Policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L1 and Local Plan Policies LC4, and LH4.**

Key Issues

1. Whether the proposed outbuilding by virtue of its size and design detailing, detracts from the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and its setting
2. Whether the development detracts from the open and undeveloped character and appearance of the immediate and surrounding landscape.

History

In 1986 permission was refused to convert the barn to holiday accommodation on the grounds that it would be isolated and sporadic development in open countryside. In 1987 a subsequent appeal was dismissed on landscape grounds and highway safety.

In 2015 an application for a change of use from barn/former blacksmith's workshop to a dwelling-house was approved, contrary to the officer recommendation, by the Authority's Planning Committee which considered that the proposal was a sustainable form of development that would support the viability and vitality of the village and that it would conserve and enhance a locally distinctive building on the edge of the settlement. Permitted development rights for alterations, extensions, and outbuildings were withdrawn, but the current proposal would, in any case, have required planning permission by virtue of its siting.

In 2016 a non-material amendment was accepted for the insertion of an 'in roof' solar panel arrangement on the south facing roof slope of the dwelling, with a further application approved to discharge conditions relating to details of the sewage treatment plant and a sample of appropriate surfacing materials for the parking and manoeuvring areas within the site.

Consultations

Highway Authority (HA) - No response to date.

District Council - No Comment to Date.

Parish Council (PC) - Object on the grounds of not being in keeping with the local vernacular and over-development of the site.

Representations

One letter of objection has been received from the resident of Beech Cottage Alstonefield, (sited approx. 175m north of the development site). The objection is essentially on private loss of view, due to the size and position of the proposed outbuilding.

Main Policies

Core Strategy

GSP1, GSP2 and GSP3, requires that particular attention is paid to the impact on the character and setting of buildings and that the design is in accord with the Authority's Design Guide and development is appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park.

DS1 and L1, supports development in the open countryside, provided that development respects, conserves and enhances the valued characteristics of the site paying particular attention to impact upon the character and setting of buildings and siting, landscaping and building materials.

CC2, states, that proposals for renewable energy development will be encouraged, provided they can be accommodated without adversely affecting landscape character and other valued characteristics of the National Park.

Saved Local Plan

Local Plan LC4 & LH4 state, that development will not normally be permitted where it would not respect, would adversely affect, or would lead to undesirable changes in the landscape or any other valued characteristic of the area. Further stating, that an appropriate scale, siting, landscaping, use of materials and a high standard of design will all be required if consent is to be granted.

Design Guidance is provided in the Authority's Supplementary Planning Documents - 1987, 2007 & 2014.

Relevant Guidance

The Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan offers further guidance on the application of landscape conservation policies in the Development Plan. In this case, the landscape around the development site is characterised as limestone village farmland, which consists of limestone villages and clusters of stone dwellings within a pastoral farmland enclosed by limestone walls, with a repeating pattern of narrow strip fields and scattered boundary trees and tree groups around buildings

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs 56 - 66 require good design whilst paragraphs 109 -116 promote the protection of sensitive landscapes. It is considered that in this case, there is no significant conflict between the above policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF, with regard to the issues that are raised.

Assessment

Design and materials of the proposed outbuilding

The outbuilding would not be constructed from traditional building materials, so would not reflect the style and traditions of local vernacular buildings which are evident throughout the surrounding village and landscape and is reflected in the style and appearance of the existing cottage, which is built of natural limestone under a tiled roof.

In this case, the outbuilding measures 5m x 3m x 2.6m to the ridge and the cottage 8.5m x 4.5m x 4.5m to the ridge. Therefore when comparing the outbuilding in relation to the cottage (in size and closeness) it would dominate the existing cottage to such an extent that the outbuilding does not appear subordinate enough in its size and massing, therefore detrimentally harming the simple character and appearance of the cottage and its setting.

In this case, the outbuilding by virtue of its size, design and materials, is considered to have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the cottage and its wider setting in the open countryside. Consequently, the proposal is considered contrary to GSP3, LC4 and LH4.

Landscape and visual impact of the proposed outbuilding

It is considered the cottage itself has limited impact on the setting and the surrounding landscape. However, one of the key characteristics of this local landscape character is the cluster of stone buildings within a pastoral farmland enclosed by limestone walls, with a repeating pattern of narrow strip fields and scattered boundary trees and tree groups around buildings (as stated in the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan). From this aspect, the siting/position of the proposed outbuilding would be clearly visible from surrounding public vantage points, particularly when seen from the Public Right of Ways (PRoW's) to the east and south of the application site.

It is therefore considered that the detached timber outbuilding would occupy a particularly prominent position and with the open characteristic of the locality and would appear unduly intrusive within the surrounding countryside, having a harmful visual impact on the cottage and its wider setting in this sensitive landscape location, contrary to policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, LH4 & LC4.

Neighbourliness

The nearest residential properties are sited over 120m away and due to this level of separation are not considered to be adversely affected by the development.

Other issues

The applicant has stated her commitment to reducing dependency on non-renewable energies which, in principle, the Authority encourages, provided they can be accommodated without adversely affecting landscape character and other valued characteristics of the National Park. Indeed, this is made clear in Planning Practice Guidance where it says that it is important to be clear that the need for renewable or low carbon energy does not automatically override environmental protections and proposals in National Parks.

Whilst it is recognised that the applicant wishes to go 'off-grid', it is considered this would not necessarily deliver sustainable development in respect of the conservation and enhancement of the site and the National Park more widely. Officers had suggested to the agent a solution in the form of a smaller scale extension with matching materials and attached to the east gable elevation of the cottage. Alternatively, a low key building within the curtilage, such as a lean-to off a wall, may be a suitable option which conserves the character and appearance of the building and its setting. This would have a less harmful effect on the character of the dwelling and consequently the impact on the wider landscape setting. Unfortunately, the applicant was unwilling to accept this, as the size would not be of a significant scale to house the key items required for the functional operation of the dwelling. In this case, Officers had stated they are open to further discussion on a revised scheme that could be supported with a recommendation of approval.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is considered that by virtue of the outbuilding's size and use of materials, it would fail to reflect the local building tradition, and thereby detract from the valued characteristics of the cottage and its setting. In addition, the timber outbuilding would be seen from public vantage points, exacerbating the harmful impact on the cottage, its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape impact. Accordingly, the application is recommended for refusal.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil