
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 August 2016

by Cullum J A Parker BA(Hons) MA MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 20 September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/E2205/Y/16/3149011

Tolhurst Farm, Pluckley Road, Smarden, Kent TN27 8NL

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr John Seaton against the decision of Ashford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 15/00928/AS, dated 30 June 2015, was refused by notice dated 23 October 2015.
 - The works proposed are described as *'internal alterations to part of the gf layout to form an open plan area between existing kitchen and lounge. Remove 'goal post' type support in the lounge area and widen existing access within the lounge ceiling'*.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

Reasons

3. The appeal building is a Grade II timber framed listed building, which was listed in the 1980s. The historic core of the building is understood to date from circa early-mid 15th Century. The Historic England Buildings File on Tolhurst Farmhouse, which contains pictures of its pre-restorative state in the mid-1980s, indicates that the eastern end of the building (or service end bay) is likely to be the earliest part of the building. The building has also been subject to later additions, including a single storey rear extension built in the last few years. Nevertheless, even with the later additions, it is possible to see that the building is a medieval hall house, containing features similar and typical of Wealden hall houses. It is from its architectural appearance and features; including but not limited to the plan form, and its associative historical link in terms of the growing affluence of agricultural workers in the 15th Century, and indeed after, which the significance of the heritage asset derives.
4. The proposal would see the removal of a 'modern' block work wall and two timbers. It is understood that these are likely to date from the 1980s, when as seen in the derelict appearance of the building shown in the Historic England photos, the building was restored. From what I saw, and with no evidence to the contrary, it appears as though the wall is not an original feature of the hall. However, it still provides an important and fundamental function to understanding the hall layout of the building before later additions were added.

5. Whilst I acknowledge that the materials forming this wall are not typical or authentic, their location and contribution to the plan form are critical to understanding how the 'hall' element of the building was originally laid out and has evolved over time. This is particularly so given that the evidence suggests that the eastern end is likely to be the oldest part of the building. What is more, the loss of the wall would create a large open plan area at the eastern end of the building, which would be at odds with the still legible medieval hall house plan form. The loss of the wall would therefore have a negative impact on the plan form and therefore the significance of the listed building.
6. In such circumstances, the retention of the plan form and therefore the wall, albeit formed by modern materials, is an important feature of the listed building. Its loss would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building. In doing so, the proposed works would fail to achieve the statutory duty set out in Section 16(2) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. Whilst I acknowledge the public benefits of ensuring the listed building remains to be used for day to day living, these are benefits which are not wholly reliant on the changes to the current plan form of the building.
7. For the reasons given above, and having taken into account all matters raised, including the comments made by the SPAB, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

Cullum J A Parker

INSPECTOR