
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 1 November 2016

by J Flack BA Solicitor

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

Decision date: 9 November 2016

Appeal A: APP/Y2810/W/16/3152008

Bridge House, Daventry Road, Badby, Northamptonshire NN11 3AB

- 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 Mrs K Brooks against the decision of Daventry District Council.
 - The application Ref DA/2015/0964, dated 9 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 12 April 2016.
 - The development proposed is conversion of barn and infill single storey rear extension.
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Appeal B: APP/Y2810/Y/16/3152007

Bridge House, Daventry Road, Badby, Northamptonshire NN11 3AB

- 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 Mrs K Brooks against the decision of Daventry District Council.
 - The application Ref DA/2015/0965, dated 9 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 11 April 2016.
 - The works proposed are conversion of barn and infill single storey rear extension.
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Decisions

1. **Appeal A:** the appeal is dismissed.
2. **Appeal B:** the appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

3. At appeal the appellant has submitted a plan¹ (the revised plan) showing alterations to the proposal. The Council has provided comments on this, and there have been no representations by interested persons. Noting also that the alterations do not substantially amend the nature of the proposal, I consider that no person would be prejudiced if I were to consider the proposal on the basis of the revised plan. My assessment proceeds accordingly.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this case is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building known as Bridge House (listed as Bridge House and attached outhouse to rear).

¹ Numbered 922-05 D

Reasons

5. The principal element of the listed building is a two storey house set back from the A361 Badby Road. It dates from the late C18, with some early C19 additions, and is an attractive example of historic vernacular architecture. Although now in use as a single private dwelling, the house was formerly a public house, and it is unsurprising that the principal rooms do not enjoy the direct relationship with the rear garden which would be usual for a purpose designed dwelling. To the rear of the house are two rectangular outbuildings set parallel with the house, but originally separated from it by a passageway. There is also a gap between the two structures. They are of similar single storey pitched roof form, although the larger of the two has attic rooms and a lean to element adjoining the boundary with the River Nene. It is also distinguished by its attachment to the house by a flat roof linking element which has enclosed the former passageway.
6. The other outbuilding is the principal focus of the appeal proposal. It is a curtilage listed structure, but that does not of itself indicate that it is of little importance. Nor does the list entry, as that is a description rather than a statement of the reasons for designation. The roof of the appeal outbuilding is of apparently recent construction, but there is no suggestion that its form was altered at this time. The wall facing the house is of brick, but the remaining three walls are constructed principally of stone, although they contain brick elements inserted by way of repair or addition. The appeal outbuilding is clearly of considerable age, and the brick elements generally do not appear at all recent. Moreover, the informal mixture of stone and brick construction is consonant with the house, and is of value in illustrating the historic evolution of the outbuilding over time as well as giving this simple and informal structure an appreciable degree of charm.
7. Save for one small window placed high up in one flank wall, the only openings in the appeal outbuilding are within the wall facing the rear elevation of the house, these being a door and a further aperture filled with vertical wooden slats. Moreover, its clear separation from the house by the passageway and the focus of its openings confirms its status as a structure which is distinct from and ancillary to the house but focussed on it, thereby giving it a distinctive character and contributing materially to the legibility of the earlier phases of the listed building's evolution. Altogether, whilst the appeal outbuilding is a modest structure, I consider that it makes a valuable and materially positive contribution to the significance of the listed building.
8. I saw on my visit that the appeal outbuilding is currently used for storage of various items. The appellant proposes that it be converted to use as a kitchen, and a number of alterations would be made. The gap between the outbuildings would be filled by a sun room, and the gap between these and the house would also be filled by a linking structure comprising a flat roof and a new entrance positioned near the far end of the current passageway between the appeal outbuilding and the house. I saw that a recent garage has been constructed to the south of the house, and adjacent to this is a large new house. There would thus be no material public views of the proposed works. However, this is not of substantial materiality to my assessment given that listed buildings are designated in the light of their inherent qualities, not the extent to which these can be appreciated in public views.

9. The Council raises no objection to the sun room, and I see no reason to disagree, noting that it would be a virtually transparent structure comprising panels of glazing within slender metal framing, the specification of which could be further controlled by condition. It would therefore not materially disrupt the interrelationship between the two outbuildings and the house, largely preserving the current sense of visual separation.
10. However, that would not be true of the proposed linking structure between the house and the appeal outbuilding and sun room. This would be far from transparent. Whilst it would have roof lights, it would otherwise consist of a conventional solid flat roof. Moreover, although the remaining element of the structure, a new entrance into the passage, would include glazed panels, these would be very narrow and would be set either side of a solid wood door. I acknowledge that the structure would essentially be a continuation of the flat roofed structure linking the house to the attached outbuilding, which does not possess roof lights, but this predates listing and does thus not provide a compelling precedent for further linking structures. I consider that the proposed linking structure would be harmful to the listed building, substantively eroding the separation of the appeal outbuilding and the house, and causing the former to read more as a rear extension to the latter than a separate building.
11. Other aspects of the proposal also cause me concern. The appellant proposes to rebuild the rear wall of the appeal outbuilding, and has provided a Structural Consultants' report and subsequent letter. I saw on my visit that the rear wall has clearly been subject to movement in the past and is very uneven. It has been subject to remedial works, notably the provision of blockwork sections within the interior and a brick buttress to the exterior. The former are clearly modern work, but the latter appears to be of some age. In any case, the rear wall contains much historic fabric, and accordingly a precautionary approach should thus be taken to proposed works. Whilst it is proposed that materials would be reused, and the internal modern blockwork removed, the remainder of the present construction would also be lost: the rebuilding would thus represent a substantive loss of historic fabric.
12. The consultants' letter states unequivocally that the wall will need to be rebuilt if the outbuilding is to be suitable for domestic use. However, the report states only that the wall "really does need to be rebuilt" on the basis of it being out of alignment, and also notes that the wall looks to be stable at this time and the repair to the rear elevation is satisfactory. Moreover, whilst I acknowledge that further stabilisation might be necessary in the future, there is no indication that any alternatives to rebuilding have been considered. I am therefore not convinced that rebuilding represents the minimum necessary intervention that is necessary to secure the future stability of the wall.
13. In any case, the wall would not be rebuilt in its current form, as a new opening is proposed. I acknowledge that the revised plan shows a reduction in its width compared to the proposal rejected by the Council in its decisions, and it has been repositioned so reduce the area of stone construction which it would occupy. However, the opening would be provided with bi-fold doors and occupy almost the full height of the wall. It would thus be a prominent feature, contrasting with the small windows to the rear elevation of the attached outbuilding, and it would reorient the focus of the appeal outbuilding away from the house, harmfully diminishing the current relationship between the two.

That would also be true of the proposed glazed door which would be inserted into the side elevation of the outbuilding facing the sun room, although I acknowledge that the revised drawing proposes a reduction in its width compared with the refused scheme. Moreover, the new openings would have an obviously domestic appearance, materially diluting the character of the structure as a historic outbuilding, and bringing its character closer to that of a residential extension.

14. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed works and development would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, the desirability of which is a matter to which I am required to have special regard by sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). The proposal would also not amount to the sensitive re-use of underused heritage assets encouraged by Policy BN5 of the Joint Core Strategy² and would conflict with the Policy's overall objective of securing and enhancing the area's heritage assets. Saved Policy GN2 of the Local Plan³ rejects development which would adversely affect listed buildings, and the proposal would thus also be contrary to this Policy.
15. For the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework, the listed building is a designated heritage asset. Within its overall context, I consider that the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 134 of the Framework requires that such harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
16. It is important that listed buildings are maintained in viable use which will secure their preservation. However, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that the appeal proposal is the only practicable way of achieving this objective in relation to the appeal outbuilding, and this substantially reduces the weight I can apportion to the benefits of the proposal in the respect. The proposal would provide convenient and attractive additional accommodation for the appellant and her family, but this seems to me an essentially private benefit in the absence of evidence that the current accommodation is deficient to an extent that would threaten the viability of the current residential use of the listed building. The appellant points to the benefit of being able to supervise children in the rear garden, drawing attention to the dangers of the River Nene, but this boundary is already provided with a fairly substantial fence and a gate which could be secured.
17. The Act requires that considerable importance and weight are to be given to the desirability of preserving the listed building: I conclude that the public benefits of the proposal are very modest and do not outweigh the material harm which would be caused to the designated heritage asset. Moreover, this conclusion is affirmed by the requirement of paragraph 132 of the Framework that great weight is to be apportioned to the conservation of designated heritage assets: it follows that the proposal would be contrary to the historic environment policies of the Framework.
18. A initial bat survey report⁴ is before me which notes the use of the appeal outbuilding by bats and birds. Its findings and recommendations have not been addressed by the parties, but it is not necessary for me to consider this further given my findings above that the appeal proposal is in any event not

² West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1), December 2014

³ Daventry District Local Plan, September 2007

⁴ Martin ecology, November 2015

acceptable. I have taken into account all other matters raised in the evidence before me, but nothing arises which disturbs my conclusions on the main issue.

19. For the above reasons, the appeals are dismissed.

J Flack

INSPECTOR