
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2017

by J J Evans BA Hons MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 13 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/Y/16/3161521

13 The Old Farmhouse, Moor Barton, Neston, Corsham, Wiltshire SN13 9SH

- 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 & Mrs J Sanders against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 15/08962/LBC, dated 7 September 2015, was refused by notice dated 26 April 2016.
 - The works proposed are the removal of existing concrete roof tiles and plastic gutters and downpipes and replacement with reclaimed double roman tiles, cast iron rainwater goods, oak fascia and installation of a small conservation roof-light to match the existing.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. 13 The Old Farmhouse is a grade II listed building. As required by Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) I have paid special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
3. The Council have referred to the building as being within the Neston Conservation Area. However, from the evidence before me, including the Council's map depicting the conservation area, their appeal questionnaire and the evidence of the appellants, it is apparent that the listed building is not within the conservation area but is adjacent to it. I have determined the application on that basis, having regard to the requirements of the Act.
4. During the Council's consideration of the application, additional works to the building were mentioned by the appellant in an email dated 21 March 2016. These works were not shown on the original application drawings nor detailed within its supporting evidence. For the avoidance of doubt I have considered the appeal on the basis of the works proposed within the original application.

Main Issue

5. During the Council's consideration of the application, the main parties agreed that the installation of oak fascia was to be removed from the application proposal. I do not disagree with this decision of the parties, nor to the replacement of the concrete roof tiles or the plastic rainwater goods. Consequently the main issue is whether the proposed rooflight would preserve
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a grade II listed building and any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses, and linked to that whether the works would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Neston Conservation Area.

Reasons

6. The Old Farmhouse is a detached T-plan shaped house, constructed of coursed rubble stone under clay and concrete roof tiles, with its historic core dating from the seventeenth century. A distinctive feature of the main range is its dormer gables, with their tall vertical emphasis. The age of the house, its vernacular form and its incremental development over time, along with the use of traditional local materials, is part of the special interest of this listed building.
7. Although there are modern houses fronting Moor Barton, the close proximity of the farmhouse to fields and paddocks reflects the former functional connection of the building to the surrounding agricultural land. The house therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the adjacent conservation area.
8. The proposed conservation style rooflight would be positioned between the coping and dormer of the eastern elevation. Even though the rooflight would be modest in size and similar to those already within the building, it would be positioned at a different level to that present on the eastern elevation. The rooflight would harmfully intrude into an uninterrupted section of the roof slope, thereby unacceptably eroding its historic character and appearance. When combined with the presence of the existing rooflight and the vent pipe the addition of another feature within the roofslope would reduce the prominence of the gable, thereby diminishing the special interest of the building.
9. I accept the house has been altered throughout its history including by the appellants and I appreciate that the rooflight would not be prominently visible. Nevertheless this is a grade II listed building and the statutory tests of the Act apply in all cases and not just where a building is visible from the public realm or where there is no local objection to a scheme. Furthermore the impact of the rooflight on the historic roof timbers of the building, including those that are exposed internally, has not been demonstrated.
10. As required by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. With regard to the proposal as a whole there would be benefits to the farmhouse in replacing modern materials with traditional ones. The modest size and design of the proposed rooflight would preserve the character and appearance of the Neston Conservation Area, but for the reasons given it would unacceptably harm the special interest of a listed building.
11. The appellants have drawn my attention to a number of policies within the Council's development plan. I have had regard to those that deal specifically with heritage assets, and although these are not determinative in listed building cases, the proposed rooflight would be contrary to Core Policies 41, 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) (CS). These policies seek amongst other things, a high quality of design and the protection and

conservation of the historic environment, reflecting an objective of the Framework.

12. The Framework advises that where a development proposal would be less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The rooflight would result in less than substantial harm to the listed building due to the relatively small size of it compared to that of the house as a whole. As there is an existing dormer window serving the bedroom, the provision of a rooflight to provide additional natural light would be a personal benefit to the appellants. There would be a limited energy improvement from reducing the need for artificial light, which would be a modest public benefit, but the use of the room would not be dependent upon the installation of the rooflight. As such the limited public benefit of the scheme would not outweigh the harm I have found to the listed building.

Other Matters

13. The appellants have drawn my attention to Policies HE4 and HE7 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2006) (LP). As these policies have been replaced by CS Core Policy 58, I have not had regard to them in my consideration of the appeal.
14. Finally the appellants' concerns regarding the Council's handling of the application including not visiting the site, undertaking little engagement, and being inconsistent in decision making, are procedural matters. Such concerns fall to be pursued by other means separate from the appeal process and are not for me to consider.

Conclusion

15. The proposed rooflight would not preserve the special interest of a listed building, and the limited public benefit would not outweigh this harm. Thus, for the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR