The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 June 2017

by John Felgate BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 03 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/D/17/3176741
The Shed, St Johns Lane, Horningsea, Cambridgeshire CB25 9JQ

- 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 Toby Young and Ms Rachel Watson against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- The application Ref S/0025/17/FL, dated 3 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 13 March 2017.
- The development proposed is a single storey side and rear extension.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issues relate to the effects of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing building, and on the setting of on the Grade II listed St Johns Barn, and on the Horningsea Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons for decision

3. Horningsea is a small rural village on the banks of the River Cam. The village dates back to mediaeval times. Historically its role was as an agricultural settlement, with access to water-borne transport. Today, its character derives largely from the many buildings that reflect that historic role, surviving from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. These include the large, double-height St Johns Barn, adjacent to the appeal site, which is a Grade II listed building (LB).

4. The dwelling now known as The Shed comprises a range of former agricultural buildings, probably from the mid or late 19th century, which were converted and partly re-built in the early 2000s. The main L-shaped building is linear in form, with a conventional dual-pitched roof, and a narrow span relative to its length. Attached to this is a re-built timber structure which has a shallow-pitched lean-to roof, coming off the main building at eaves level.

5. The appeal building forms part of the former farmyard complex of St John's Farm, where a large number of other barns and outbuildings, including St John's Barn, have also been retained and converted to residential use. Although these buildings vary quite widely in terms of their differing heights and materials, they are nevertheless unified by their self-evident agricultural origins, and by their linear or L-shaped building forms and dual-pitched roofscape. Together they form a harmonious group, at the heart of the village CA, which serves to emphasise the village's historic role as part of a farming community.

6. The development now proposed would extend the existing lean-to structure beyond the end of the main building, and would then add a further mono-pitched addition, rising away from the existing building to form a valley or 'butterfly'-type roof. This roof form would be uncharacteristic of agricultural buildings of any period, and especially the historical styles which predominate in the immediate locality. The plan form would also fail to reflect or complement the linear form of the existing building or surrounding buildings. To my mind, these features would give the proposed development a visually jarring appearance, which would be alien to the surroundings. As such, the development would have a detrimental visual impact on the Horningsea CA, and on the setting of the listed St Johns Barn.

7. I fully accept that little would be visible from the limited public viewpoints, in St Johns Lane or Dock Lane. But the duties conferred by Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in respect of CAs and the settings of LBs, are not limited to what is seen publicly. Moreover, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it clear that what is important in the case of designated heritage assets is the preservation or enhancement of their intrinsic significance, including any contribution to that significance which relates to their setting. In the present case, for the reasons stated, the CA itself would be directly harmed, and so too would the setting of the LB, detracting from their significance as heritage assets.

8. In terms of the terminology used in the NPPF, the harm caused to the CA and LB would be 'less than substantial'. But harm of any kind would be contrary to the legislative provisions that I have identified. NPPF paragraph 134 calls for such harm to be weighed against any public benefits arising from the proposal, but in this case none are evident.

9. In addition, although the appeal building is not listed, the Council argues that it should be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset. This has not been contested, and given the building's likely age, and its contribution to the former farmyard group, and to the CA as a whole, I see no reason to disagree. In my view, for the reasons already given, the proposed development would obscure the original building form and plan form, and thus dilute its contribution to the farmyard group. The development would thus detract from the building's significance as a heritage asset, and this reinforces my view on the merits of the scheme as a whole.

10. I agree that change is a likely feature of any farmyard, and that the buildings on the appeal site have changed over the years. But this does not justify a proposal that would be harmful. I note that the present scheme is intended as a response to a previous refusal. But no clear reasons have been given as to why the development could not be designed to reflect and complement the existing building forms and roofscape. I note that other contemporary designs have been approved in the village, but these do not change my view of the appeal proposal.

11. Having taken account of all the other matters raised, I conclude that the development would fail to preserve or enhance the CA, or the LB's setting, contrary to Policies CH/4 and CH/5 of the South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies, adopted in July 2007.

John Felgate
INSPECTOR