
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 20 November 2019

by S J Papworth DipArch(Glos) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 December 2019

Appeal A: APP/N1730/W/19/3226867

Roke Farm, Hillside, Odiham, Hook RG29 1HZ

- 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 & Mrs R Saunders against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/01497/FUL, dated 3 July 2018, was refused by the Council by notice dated 24 October 2018.
 - The development proposed is to convert an existing agricultural barn in to a holiday cottage.
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Appeal B: APP/N1730/Y/19/3226871

Roke Farm, Hillside, Odiham, Hook RG29 1HZ

- 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 R Saunders against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/01820/LBC, dated 9 August 2018, was refused by the Council by notice dated 24 October 2018.
 - The works proposed are conversion of Grade II list agricultural barn to a holiday let.
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Decisions

1. I dismiss both appeals

Reasons

2. The building is Listed Grade II and the main issue in both appeals is the effect of the proposed change of use and necessary works on the architectural or historic significance of the building and its setting. Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
3. Saved Policy CON17 of the Hart District Local Plan concerns proposals for the extension or alteration of listed buildings and requires that the scale of the building is not materially changed; and that the design is appropriate to the character and setting of the building. Policy CON18 concerns the change of use of listed buildings, which will only be permitted if in keeping with the building and would not materially affect features of historic or architectural importance. Policies RUR12 and RUR13 provide for business use in rural settlements and in the open countryside provided, among other things, the proposal has no detrimental effects on historical features.

4. The Odiham and North Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' and is part of the Development Plan. The goal of, as far as possible, not harming the heritage significance of the conservation areas and other designated heritage assets is stated, and Policy 1 states that proposals for development outside the settlement boundary will only be granted with clear justification as required by policies controlling development in such sensitive locations. Policy 5 requires development which affects any heritage asset to respect the significance of the asset and demonstrate how local distinctiveness is reinforced.
5. The Council have referred to emerging policy that reflects the more balanced approach in the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 193 of that document states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, while paragraphs 195 and 196 allow for a balance of harm and benefits to be struck. With regard to the rural economy, paragraph 83 seeks decisions that enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.
6. The Council made clear in an e-mail subsequent to the Decisions that the principle of a barn conversion to guest accommodation would be supported, but that the concern was over the works necessary to achieve that change to this particular barn. The appellants were invited to consider whether there was another suitable, unlisted, structure on the site even if curtilage listed.
7. The appellants have supplied a photograph taken prior to repair works that are stated to have taken place in the late 1990s which shows the barn roof in a poor state of repair with corrugated sheeting in place and parts of the timber structure open to the elements. The barn seen at the site inspection appeared to have been carefully repaired with significant architectural features conserved, so that it is a well presented example of an agricultural building with many internal historic features of high significance, from the structure which is almost wholly visible to the floor finishes, although some of the latter are not historic items, but are historically correct repairs. Externally the significance is also high, derived from the building's form and finish, with the cart bays being open and together with the barn itself, forming a recognisable historic farm building set in an agricultural landscape, albeit eroded somewhat by later hedges and residential uses.
8. The works proposed involve the laying of a new concrete floor, preferred to a suspended timber floor in order to avoid air bricks in the existing brick plinth, and the need to lower the internal ground level further which would require further underpinning. Insulation would be added to all external walls and under-roof soffits, with a board finish. Some internal walls and a first floor would be removed, but these are not original features, and a new first floor and stairs would be inserted along with partitions to provide the bedrooms and bathrooms. The space over the lounge would however be kept open.
9. Considering the detail drawings, there are elements that would be 'light-touch' and reversible, such as the internal lining to the brickwork, and the lining to the timber frames and roof timbers could be arranged to be reversible while exposing some of the timber depth to view. However, the concrete floor would be disruptive of the building and cannot be considered a 'light touch'.

10. Openings in the external walls would be altered, the glazing behind the existing fixed timber louvres would be an acceptable intervention, but the formation of other openings and glazing involving the removal of timbers, would be harmful, and particularly the proposal to glaze in the cart bays. There is evidence of a previous lean-to at the rear, both on the ground and in the old photograph supplied and this addition would be acceptable.
11. No details are provided but there would be a likelihood of a domestic curtilage being formed within the tightly drawn red-line site boundary, which would risk eroding the present open link with the arable farming landscape, by the addition of outdoor chairs and the other domestic paraphernalia that a holiday-let might be expected to provide.
12. All of the foregoing leads to the conclusion that harm would be caused to the architectural and historic significance of the listed barn through actual works that would cover or alter features, and through the change of use altering the appearance and character of the building.
13. The level of harm would be 'less than substantial', a differentiation required between paragraphs 195 and 196 of the Framework. In this case the latter applies and this states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
14. The building is stated to be redundant and having mind to the modern storage buildings seen in the farmstead and the different uses put to other buildings including a recent conversion to a home office, that appears a reasonable position. However, the words 'optimum viable use' should not be taken to mean the most advantageous financially and must take account of the building and the effect of the works required.
15. It is the case that this building has been put into a good state of repair and has been conserved, or restored, to a high standard. The works now proposed would undo a significant amount of the previous good work. It is accepted in coming to this view that putting a building back into a reasonably accurate former condition does not secure its long-term future without a use, but it does provide a base-level of significance, and much of that good work would now be undone and the significance lost. It is a fact that had the barn been in a poor state, that balance might have been different, but that is not the case.
16. There would be public benefits from employment and economic activity, the appellants already have holiday accommodation interests as part of the farm diversification encouraged by national and local policies. The pressures felt by agricultural businesses are acknowledged and there is currently uncertainty over future agricultural income. However, the Council do not object on principle to holiday-let conversions in the countryside as stated previously.
17. The conversion of the home office under references 17/02309/HOU and 17/02310/LBC appears to have involved much of the same physical works, but that was a curtilage listed building, rather than being listed in its own right as is the appeal barn, and each decision must be taken on its merits and within the policy and legislative framework relevant to the building.
18. To conclude, the public benefits associated with this proposal do not outweigh the harm caused to the architectural and historic significance of the listed building. The proposals are contrary to Local Plan Policies CON17 and CON18

as well as Policy 5 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and the weight attaching to the aims of Policies RUR12 and RUR13 as well as Neighbourhood Plan Policy 1 do not alter that conclusion. The statutory tests in sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the 1990 Act would not be satisfied and the proposed works would not accord with the aims of the Framework on the preservation of designated heritage assets. For the reasons given above it is concluded that both appeals should be dismissed.

S J Papworth

INSPECTOR