



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2020

by Jillian Rann BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R1038/Y/20/3249650

Crofters Barn, Westthorpe Road, Killamarsh S21 1EU

- 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 Ms Rachel Johnson against the decision of North East Derbyshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00748/LB, dated 23 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 October 2019.
 - The works proposed are described as: 'two cream composite doors fitted (front and back) of my property'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council and the appellant refer to the doors having already been installed. It appears that the appellant was not aware that listed building consent was required for the works when they were carried out. However, I have considered the appeal on the basis that consent is now sought to retain the works.
3. The appeal relates to a grade II listed building. There are also other grade II listed buildings nearby. I am mindful of my statutory duties under section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) and have considered the appeal accordingly.
4. There is no statutory requirement to have regard to the provisions of the development plan for applications for listed building consent. The Council's reason for refusal refers to Policies GS1 and BE7 of the adopted North East Derbyshire Local Plan and Policies SS1 and SDC6 of the emerging North East Derbyshire Local Plan (2014-2034). Amongst other things those policies seek to protect heritage assets and preserve the special interest and setting of listed buildings. As such they broadly reflect the statutory duties defined in the Act.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the special interest of the grade II listed building known as 'Barn to the South East of Westthorpe Farmhouse'¹ and on the setting of the grade II listed buildings known as

¹ Notwithstanding variations in the spelling of 'Westthorpe Farmhouse' in the appeal submissions, I have adopted the spelling used in the list descriptions for the listed buildings to which this appeal relates.

'Westhorpe Farmhouse' and 'Farm Outbuilding to the South of Westhorpe Farmhouse'.

Reasons

The special interest and setting of the listed buildings

6. The appeal relates to Crofters Barn, one of two dwellings which were created some years ago via the conversion of a grade II listed former barn to the south east of Westhorpe Farmhouse.
7. The appeal building dates from the 17th century and has been the subject of numerous alterations over the years. However, it has nonetheless retained many of its historic features and details. Those include the full height opening in the adjoining property, Cruck Barn, and the distinctive triangular vents to its long front and rear elevations. Where new domestic windows and doors have been inserted in the walls of the building they are relatively limited in size and number. The windows and doors in those openings are in timber, a traditional material sympathetic to the age and agricultural nature of the building. Therefore, despite not being original openings, those works have maintained the rural agricultural character and appearance of the building overall.
8. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the significance of the listed appeal building arises from its historic and architectural interest as a well-preserved example of a vernacular agricultural building that has maintained its rural character and appearance. The building also draws historic interest from those elements of its historic fabric that it has retained and the use of sympathetic traditional materials.
9. Together with a further (now converted) outbuilding to the south of Westhorpe Farmhouse and Westhorpe Farmhouse itself the appeal building forms part of an historic group of former farm buildings arranged around a courtyard. Those other buildings are grade II listed and are also well-preserved examples of historic farm buildings. As such they also each have historic and architectural interest which contribute to their individual significance.
10. As part of the same former farm complex, the appeal building has an historic functional connection to those other two listed buildings. The historic form and layout of that former farm complex remains legible despite the conversion of the appeal building and the other former outbuilding to residential use. The appeal building and those other two listed buildings therefore also have historic and architectural interest as a group. Consequently, the appeal building forms an integral part of the setting of those other two listed buildings and contributes to the understanding of those assets and to their significance.

The effect on the special interest and setting of the listed buildings

11. Consent is sought for the installation of two composite doors as replacements for timber doors in the front and rear of the building. The doors themselves have a woodgrain-effect plastic finish and incorporate panels which have the appearance of vertical timber boarding. Their frames are quite narrow in profile and also have a woodgrain-effect plastic finish. Consequently, at present they may not be readily discernible from painted timber doors when viewed from a distance by a casual observer.

12. The replacement doors may be of a high quality in terms of their construction. However, the plastic in their coating is a modern, synthetic material which is not sympathetic to the historic character or traditional materials of this former agricultural building. Additionally, despite the use of woodgrain-effect detailing, the patina and regular machine-produced finish of plastic do not truly match or reflect the more irregular, informal appearance of painted timber. Those differences would be discernible on closer inspection. Furthermore, I cannot be certain that the plastic coating would age or mature in the same way as painted timber or that any existing similarities between the doors and other timber openings would thus be maintained in the future.
13. Given the above, the works would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building.
14. The unsympathetic, non-traditional material used in the coating of the doors would also have an erosive effect on the well-preserved appearance of the wider historic farm complex. The works would also cause harm to the setting of those other nearby listed buildings within the group. The expressions of support received from the occupants of some of those nearby listed buildings do not alter the harm to the setting that I have identified.
15. I have been referred to the use of composite materials in the appeal building's rooflights. I have also been advised that aluminium guttering and similar composite doors have been installed on other buildings within the former farm complex. However, I do not have full details before me of those fixtures or the circumstances in which they were installed. Consequently, I cannot be certain that they were directly comparable to those in the case before me. In any event, I have considered the appeal on its own planning merits. References to the use of other non-traditional materials elsewhere do not alter my conclusions regarding the harm that would arise as a result of the particular proposal before me.
16. I am advised that consent was not required by the Council for the installation of a similar composite door and window in the detached garage to the rear of the appeal building. The information before me in that regard is limited. However, the garage appears to be of relatively recent, rather than historic construction. Despite its proximity to the listed building, the presence of composite doors and windows on that more modern structure does not alter my conclusions regarding the harm arising from the installation of such features within the historic listed building.
17. Given the above, the proposal would cause harm to the special interest of the grade II listed appeal building and to the setting of the nearby grade II listed buildings known as 'Westhorpe Farmhouse' and 'Farm Outbuilding to the south of Westhorpe Farmhouse'.

Public benefits

18. The harm arising would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, I give considerable importance and weight to that harm and to the presumption that preservation is desirable. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires any such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

19. The appellant states that she has had to replace previously-installed timber doors several times. She refers to having been unable to open the previous timber front door or lock it from the outside on occasion due to the timber swelling up when wet. She has therefore identified concerns regarding the associated implications for fire safety and building security, including with reference to crime and burglary rates in the area. I am advised that the composite doors have improved the security and thermal insulation of the building compared with the timber doors which they replaced, reducing energy use and home insurance costs.
20. Matters of safety, security and greater thermal and energy efficiency are public benefits which weigh in favour of the proposal. I also note references made to the unattractive appearance of previous, rotten timber doors and to composite doors having lower ongoing maintenance requirements and costs compared to timber doors. However, I do not have detailed information before me regarding those previous timber doors or evidence to suggest why they might have repeatedly failed as described. Nor do I have compelling evidence to indicate whether alternatives have been explored which would resolve any such issues and achieve the public benefits referred to, including a modern locking system, without the need for composite doors.
21. Therefore, from the evidence before me I cannot be certain that the composite doors are necessarily the only means of addressing those deficiencies that have been experienced previously or achieving the public benefits that have been highlighted. Consequently, the weight I afford those public benefits is limited and does not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

22. Given the above, the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the grade II listed building known as 'Barn to the South East of Westhorpe Farmhouse' or the setting of the grade II listed buildings known as Westhorpe Farmhouse and 'Farm Outbuilding to the South of Westhorpe Farmhouse'. It would thus fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act or paragraph 192 of the Framework.
23. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jillian Rann

INSPECTOR